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THE

RISE AND PROGRESS

OF

RELIGION IN THE SOUL:

ILLUSTRATED IN A

COURSE OF SERIOUS AND PRACTICAL

ADDRESSES,

SUITED TO

PERSONS OF EVERY CHARACTER AND CIRCUMSTANCE.

With a Devout

MEDITATION AND PRAYER

ADDED TO EACH CHAPTER.

To which is subjoined,

A SERMON ON THE CARE OF THE SOUL.

By PHILIP DODDRIDGE, D. D.

WITH AN

INDEX OF SUBJECTS.

BOSTON:

PRINTED AND SOLD BY JAMES LORING, NO. 2, CORNHILL.

1818.

☞ THE Publisher of this Boston edition of Dr. Doddridge's *Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul* has carefully compared it with different copies, and corrected a number of errors.

The Index, which is now for the first time published with this most excellent work, he hopes will be found peculiarly serviceable to the reader, and facilitate its more general and useful perusal. Whatever has such a tendency, will be considered by the pious as accomplishing a result, which will have a happy influence on the best and most interesting concerns of time and eternity.

D66
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District Clerk's Office.

BE IT REMEMBERED, That on the eighteenth day of March, A. D. 1818, and in the forty-second year of the Independence of the United States of America, JAMES LORING, of the said District, has deposited in this Office the title of a Book, the right whereof he claims as Proprietor in the words following, to wit:

"An Index of Subjects, which are discussed or alluded to in Dr. Doddridge's Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul."

In conformity to the Act of the Congress of the United States, entitled, "An Act for the encouragement of Learning, by securing the Copies of Maps, Charts and Books, to the Authors and Proprietors of such Copies, during the Times therein mentioned: and also to an Act entitled, "An Act supplementary to an Act entitled, An Act for the Encouragement of Learning, by securing the Copies of Maps, Charts and Books to the Authors and Proprietors of such Copies during the times therein mentioned; and extending the Benefits thereof to the Arts of Designing, Engraving and Etching Historical, and other Prints."

JNO. W. DAVIS,
Clerk of the District of Massachusetts.

TO THE REV. DR. ISAAC WATTS.

REVEREND AND DEAR SIR,

WITH the moſt affectionate gratitude and reſpect, I beg leave to preſent you a book, which owes its exiſtence to your requeſt, its copiouſneſs to your plan, and much of its perſpicuity to your review, and to the uſe I made of your remarks on that part of it, which your health and leiſure would permit you to examine. I addreſs it to you, not to beg your patronage to it, for of that I am already well aſſured; and much leſs from any ambition of attempting your character, for which, if I were more equal to the ſubject, I ſhould think this a very improper place; but chiefly, from a ſecret delight which I find in the thought of being known to thoſe whom this may reach, as one whom you have honoured, not only with your friendſhip, but with ſo much of your eſteem and approbation too, as muſt ſubſtantially appear in your committing a work to me, which you had yourſelf projected as one of the moſt conſiderable ſervices of your life.

I have long thought the love of popular applauſe a meanneſs, which a philoſophy far inferior to that of our Divine Maſter might have taught us to conquer; but to be eſteemed by eminently great and good men, to whom we are intimately known, appears to me, not only one of the moſt ſolid atteſtations of ſome real worth, but, next to the approbation of God and our own conſciences, one of its moſt valuable rewards. It will, I doubt not, be found ſo in that world, to which ſpirits like yours are tending, and for which, through divine grace, you have obtained ſo uncommon a degree of ripeneſs. And permit me, Sir, while I write this, to refreſh myſelf with the hope, that when the union of hearts, which has ſo long ſubſiſted between us, ſhall arrive to its full maturity and endearment there, it will be matter of mutual delight to recollect, that you have aſſigned me, and that I have in ſome degree executed, a

taſk, which may perhaps, under the bleſſing of God, awaken and improve religious ſentiments in the minds of thoſe whom we leave behind us, and of others who may ariſe after us, in this vain, tranſitory, enſnaring world.

Such is the improvement you have made of your capacities for ſervice, that I am fully perſuaded heaven has received very few, in theſe latter ages, who have done ſo much to ſerve its intereſts here below; few, who have laboured in this beſt of cauſes with equal aſſiduity, and equal ſucceſs. And, therefore, I cannot but join with all, who wiſh well to the Chriſtian intereſt among us, in acknowledging the goodneſs of Providence to you and to the Church of Chriſt, in prolonging a life, at once ſo valuable and ſo tender, to ſuch an advanced period. With them, Sir, I rejoice that God hath given you to poſſeſs, in ſo extraordinary a degree, not only the conſciouſneſs of intending great benefit to the world, but the ſatisfaction of having effected it, and of ſeeing ſuch an harveſt already ſpringing up, I hope as an earneſt of a much more copious increaſe from thence. With multitudes more, I bleſs God that you are not, in this evening of ſo afflicted, and yet ſo laborious a day, rendered entirely incapable of ſerving the public from the preſs and from the pulpit; and that amidſt the pain which your active ſpirit feels, when theſe pleaſing ſervices ſuffer long interruptions from bodily weakneſs, it may be ſo ſingularly refreſhed by reflecting on that ſphere of extenſive uſefulneſs, in which, by your writings, you continually move.

I congratulate you, dear Sir, that while you are, in a multitude of families and ſchools of the lower claſs, condeſcending to the humble, yet important work, of forming infant minds to the firſt rudiments of religious knowledge and devout impreſſions, by your various Catechiſms and Divine Songs, you are alſo daily reading Lectures on Logic, and other branches of philoſophy, to ſtudious youth; and this not only in private academies, but in the moſt public celebrated ſeats of learning; not merely in Scotland and in our American colonies, (where, from ſome peculiar conſiderations, it might moſt naturally be expected) but through the amiable candour of ſome excellent men and accompliſhed tutors, in our Engliſh univerſities too. I congratulate you, that you are teaching, no doubt, hun-

dreds of Miniſters, and thouſands of private Chriſtians, by your ſermons and other theological writings: So happily calculated to diffuſe through their minds that light of knowledge, and through their hearts that fervour of piety, which God has been pleaſed to enkindle in your own. But, above all, I congratulate you, that by your ſacred poetry, eſpecially by your Pſalms and your Hymns, you are leading the worſhip, and, I truſt, alſo animating the devotion of myriads, in our public aſſemblies every ſabbath, and in their families or cloſets every day. This, Sir, at leaſt ſo far as it relates to the ſervice of the ſanctuary, is an unparalleled favour by which God hath been pleaſed to diſtinguiſh you, I may boldly ſay it, beyond any of his ſervants now upon earth.—Well may it be eſteemed a glorious equivalent, and indeed much more than equivalent for all thoſe views of eccleſiaſtical preferment, to which ſuch talents, learning, virtues, and intereſts, might have entitled you in an eſtabliſhment; and I doubt not but you joyfully accept it as ſuch.

Nor is it eaſy to conceive in what circumſtances you could, on any ſuppoſition, have been eaſier and happier than in that pious and truly honourable family, in which, as I verily believe, in ſpecial indulgence both to you and it, Providence has been pleaſed to appoint that you ſhould ſpend ſo conſiderable a part of your life. It is my earneſt prayer, that all the remainder of it may be ſerene, uſeful and pleaſant. And as, to my certain knowledge, your compoſitions have been the ſingular comfort of many excellent Chriſtians (ſome of them numbered among my deareſt friends) on their dying bed; for I have heard ſtanzas of them repeated from the lips of ſeveral, who were, doubtleſs, in a few hours, to begin the Song of Moſes and the Lamb; ſo I hope and truſt, that when God ſhall call you to that ſalvation, for which your faith and patience hath ſo long been waiting, he will ſhed around you the choiceſt beams of his favour, and gladden your heart with conſolations, like thoſe which you have been the happy inſtrument of adminiſtering to others.

In the mean time, Sir, be aſſured, that I am not a little animated in the various labours to which Providence has called me, by reflecting that I have ſuch a contemporary,

and eſpecially ſuch a friend; whoſe ſingle preſence would be to me as that of a cloud of witneſſes here below, to awaken my alacrity in the race that is ſet before me. And, I am perſuaded, that while I ſay this, I ſpeak the ſentiments of many of my brethren, even of various denominations; a conſideration, which, I hope, will do ſomething towards reconciling a heart ſo generous as yours, to the delay of that exceeding and eternal weight of glory, which is now ſo nearly approaching. Yes, my honoured friend, you will, I hope, cheerfully endure a little longer continuance in life, amidſt all its infirmities; from an aſſurance, that while God is pleaſed to maintain the exerciſe of your reaſon, it is hardly poſſible that you ſhould live in vain, to the world, or yourſelf. Every day, and every trial, is brightening your crown, and rendering you ſtill more meet for an inheritance among the ſaints in light. Every word that you drop from the pulpit has now, ſurely, its peculiar weight; the eyes of many are on their aſcending prophet, eagerly intent that they may catch, if not his mantle, at leaſt ſome divine ſentence from his lips, which may long guide their ways, and warm their hearts. This ſolicitude your friends bring into thoſe happy moments in which they are favoured with your converſe in private; and when you are retired from them, your prayers, I doubt not, largely contribute towards guarding your country, watering the church, and bleſſing the world. Long may they continue to anſwer theſe great ends! And permit me, Sir, to conclude, with expreſſing my cheerful confidence, that in thoſe beſt moments, you are often particularly mindful of one, who ſo highly eſteems, ſo greatly needs, and ſo warmly returns that remembrance, as,

Reverend and dear Sir,

Your moſt affectionate Brother,

And obliged humble ſervant,

P. DODDRIDGE.

Northampton, Dec. 13, 1744.

PREFACE.

THE ſeveral hints given in the Dedication, and the firſt chapter of this Treatiſe, which contains a particular plan of the deſign, render it unneceſſary to introduce it with a long preface. Some of my readers may perhaps remember, that ſeveral years ago, I promiſed this work to the public, in the preface to the ſecond edition of my Sermons *on the Power and Grace of Chriſt*, &c. My much honoured friend, Dr. WATTS, had laid the ſcheme, eſpecially of the former part. But as thoſe indiſpoſitions, with which (to the unſpeakable grief of the churches) God has been pleaſed to exerciſe him, had forbid his hopes of being able to add *this* to his many *labours of love* to immortal ſouls, he was pleaſed, in a very affectionate and importunate manner, to urge me to undertake it. And I bleſs God with my whole heart, not only that he hath carried me through this delightful taſk, (for ſuch indeed I have found it) but alſo, that he hath ſpared that worthy and amiable perſon to ſee it accompliſhed, and given him ſtrength and ſpirit to review ſo conſiderable a part of it. His approbation, expreſſed in ſtronger terms than modeſty will permit me to repeat, encourages me to hope, that it is executed in ſuch a manner as may, by the divine bleſſing, render it of ſome general ſervice. And I the rather hope it will be ſo, as it now comes abroad into the world, not only with my own prayers and his, but alſo with thoſe of many other pious friends, which I have been particularly careful to engage for its ſucceſs.

Into whatever hands this work may come, I muſt deſire that, before any paſs their judgment, they would pleaſe to read it through, that they may diſcern the connexion between one part of it and another. Which I the rather requeſt, becauſe I have long obſerved, that Chriſtians of different parties have been eagerly laying hold on particular parts of the ſyſtem of divine truth, and have been contending about them; as if each had been all; or as if the

ſeparation of the members from each other, and from the head, were the preſervation of the body, inſtead of its deſtruction. They have been zealous to eſpouſe the defence, and to maintain the honour and uſefulneſs, of each apart, whereas their honour as well as uſefulneſs, ſeems to me to lie much in their connexion; and ſuſpicions have often ariſen betwixt the reſpective defenders of each, which have appeared as unreaſonable and abſurd as if all the preparations for ſecuring one part of a ſhip in a ſtorm, were to be cenſured as a contrivance to ſink the reſt. I pray God to give to *all his miniſters* and *people* more and more of *the ſpirit of wiſdom*, and of *love*, and of *a ſound mind*; and to remove far from us thoſe mutual jealouſies and animoſities, which hinder our acting with that unanimity which is neceſſary in order to the ſucceſsful carrying on our common warfare againſt the enemies of Chriſtianity. We may be ſure theſe enemies will never fail to make their own advantage of our multiplied diviſions and ſevere conteſts with each other. But they muſt neceſſarily loſe both their ground and their influence, in proportion to the degree in which the energy of Chriſtian principles is felt, to unite and transform the hearts of thoſe by whom they are profeſſed.

I take this opportunity of adding, that as this treatiſe may be looked upon as the ſequel of my *Sermons on Regeneration*, though in ſomething of a different method, I have been ſolicitous to make them both as cheap as poſſible, that I may fall in with the charitable deſigns of thoſe who may purpoſe to give them away. There is, however, an edition of this treatiſe in octavo, for ſuch as rather chooſe to have it in a larger character, and fairer form.

I have ſtudied the greateſt plainneſs of ſpeech, that the loweſt of my readers may, if poſſible, be able to underſtand every word; and I hope, perſons of a more elegant taſte, and refined education, will pardon what appeared to me ſo neceſſary a piece of charity.—Such a care in practical writers ſeems one important inſtance of that honouring of all men, which our amiable and condeſcending religion teaches; and I have been particularly obliged to my worthy patron, for what he hath done to ſhorten ſome of the ſentences, and to put my meaning into plainer and more familiar words. Yet I dare ſay, the world will not ſuf-

pect it of having contracted any impropriety or inelegance of language, by paſſing through the hands of Dr. WATTS.

I muſt add one remark here, which I heartily wiſh I had not omitted in the firſt edition, *viz.*—That though I do in this book conſider my reader as ſucceſſively in a great variety of ſuppoſed circumſtances, beginning with thoſe of a *thoughtleſs ſinner*, and leading him though ſeveral ſtages of conviction, terror, &c. as what may be previous to his ſincerely accepting the goſpel, and devoting himſelf to the ſervice of God; yet I would by no means be thought to inſinuate, that every one who is brought to that happy reſolution, arrives at it through thoſe particular ſteps, or feels agitations of mind equal, in any degree, to thoſe I have deſcribed. Some ſenſe of ſin, and ſome ſerious and humbling apprehenſion of our danger and miſery in conſequence of it, muſt indeed be neceſſary, to diſpoſe us to receive the grace of the goſpel, and the Saviour, who is there exhibited to our faith; but God is pleaſed ſometimes to begin the work of his grace on the heart almoſt from the firſt dawning of reaſon, and to carry it on by ſuch gentle and inſenſible degrees, that very excellent perſons, who have made the moſt eminent attainments in the divine life, have been unable to recount any remarkable hiſtory of their converſion. And ſo far as I can learn, this is moſt frequently the caſe with thoſe of them who have enjoyed the benefits of a pious education, when it has not been ſucceeded by a vicious and licentious youth. God forbid, therefore, that any ſhould be ſo inſenſible of their own happineſs as to fall into perplexity with relation to their ſpiritual ſtate, for want of being able to trace ſuch a riſe of religion in their minds as it was neceſſary, on my plan, for me to deſcribe and exemplify here. I have ſpoken my ſentiments on this head ſo fully in the VIIIth. of my *Sermons on Regeneration*, that I think none who has read and remembers the general contents of it, can be in danger of miſtaking my meaning here. But as it is very poſſible this book may fall into the hands of many, who have not read the other, and have no opportunity of conſulting it, I thought proper to inſert this caution in the preface to this; and I am much obliged to that worthy and excellent perſon, who kindly reminded me of the expediency of doing it.

BRIEF MEMOIR

OF THE

REV. PHILIP DODDRIDGE, D. D.

DR. Doddridge was born in London, June 26, 1702. Being of a conſumptive habit from infancy, both himſelf and his friends were apprehenſive, that his life would be ſhort. His parents brought him up in the early knowledge of religion; but they died before his 14th year. His being left an orphan, excited in him very ſerious reflections, which, however, were not wholly of a gloomy nature; for he expreſſed a devout and cheerful truſt in the protection of the univerſal Parent of mankind. About this time he was peculiarly happy in the patronage of Dr Samuel Clark, who treated him with the kindneſs of a parent. Soon after, by the miſmanagement of the perſon to whom his property was intruſted on his father's death, he loſt the whole of it; but he found a ready benefactor in Mr. Clark, and was enabled to purſue his ſtudies. As he had the Chriſtian miniſtry in view, beſides his application to the languages, he read every morning and evening, portions of ſcripture, with ſome commentary upon them; and it was very ſeldom that he ſuffered any avocations or amuſements to divert him from this courſe. Before he was ſixteen, he made a public profeſſion of religion.

He purſued his ſtudies, with unwearied diligence, with Dr. Clark and Mr. Jennins. While he was thus laying up a ſtore of ſolid knowledge, he was equally intent upon cultivating the excellencies of the Chriſtian character.

At 20 years of age he was approbated by a committee of miniſters, and preached his firſt ſermon. From his firſt appearance in the pulpit, he was remarkably acceptable. In June, 1723, he ſettled at Kibworth. As the congregation was ſmall, and he lived in an obſcure village, he could devote almoſt his whole time to the farther acquiſition of learning; and this he did with indefatigable zeal. Soon after his ſettlement at Kibworth, one of his fellow pupils having condoled with him, in a letter, on his being buried alive, he returned the following ſenſible and ſpirited anſwer: "Here I ſtick cloſe to thoſe delightful ſtudies which a favourable Providence has made the buſineſs of my life. One day paſſeth away after another, and I only know that it paſſeth peaſantly with me. As for the world about me, I have very little concern with it. I live almoſt like a tortoiſe, ſhut up in its ſhell, almoſt always in the ſame town, the ſame houſe, the ſame chamber. Yet I live like a prince; not indeed in the pomp of greatneſs, but the pride of liberty; maſter of my books, maſter of my time, and, I hope I may add, maſter of myſelf. I can willingly give up the charms of London, the luxury the company, and the popularity of it, for the ſecret pleaſures of rational employment and ſelf-approbation; retired from applauſe and reproach, from envy and contempt, and the deſtructive baits of avarice and ambition. So that, inſtead of lamenting it as my misfortune, you ſhould congratulate me upon it as my happineſs, that I am confined to an obſcure village; ſeeing it gives me ſo many valuable advantages, to the moſt im-

portant purposes of devotion and philosophy; and I hope I may add, usefulness too."

In 1729, he was chosen assistant to Mr. Some, at Harborough. Though but little more than 27, the fame of his abilities was so much spread abroad, that his settlement among them was sought for by various large societies.

Induced by the earnest solicitations of many eminent divines, in 1729, Mr Doddridge opened an Academy at Harborough, for the instruction of youth intended for the ministry; a situation, which formed a distinguished scene of his usefulness. In December, 1729, he accepted ar urgent invitation to take the pastoral charge of the church in Northampton; and removed, with his Academy, to that place.

It would carry us beyond the limits assigned to this narrative, to describe at large the diligence, zeal and fervour with which Mr Doddridge discharged his pastoral duty. He thought it a part of ministerial prudence to take public notice of remarkable providential occurrences. He endeavoured, in his sermons, to deduce lessons of wisdom and piety from important transactions, affecting the nation, town, or any considerable number of his hearers. Nor did he neglect uncommon appearances of nature, or other events that were the subjects of general conversation. In his manner of speaking, he had an earnestness and pathos which tended greatly to affect his hearers. He was always warm and affectionate in the applications of his sermons. His sentiments on this head he has thus expressed: "It is indeed unworthy the character of a man and a christian, to endeavour to transport men's passions, while the understanding is left uninformed, and the reason unconvinced. But, so far as is consistent with a proper regard to this leading power of our nature, I would speak and write of divine truth with a holy fervency; nor can I imagine that it would bode well to the interest of religion to endeavour to lay all those passions asleep, which surely God implanted in our hearts to serve the religious as well as the civil life, and which after all, will probably be employed to some very excellent or very pernicious purposes."

In his very important station of a tutor, he acquired uncommon reputation. During the twenty two years in which he sustained this office, he had about two hundred young men under his care.

In the year 1736, the two Colleges of the University of Aberdeen in Scotland, concurred in conferring upon Mr Doddridge the degree of Doctor in Divinity.

In 1739, our author gave to the public the first volume in quarto, of his great work, "The Family Expositor, &c." The second volume was published in 1740.

The year 1745 was distinguished in Dr Doddridge's life by the appearance of one of the most popular and useful of his practical works—"The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul." Dr Watts had formed a similar design; but having been prevented from its execution by his infirmities, he recommended it to our author, as the best qualified of all his acquaintance for discharging it in the manner that would be beneficial to the world. It was with some reluctance that Dr. Doddridge, amidst his various other weighty concerns, agreed to comply with the request of his venerable friend; but it was urged with an importunity that he could not resist; and he had afterwards the highest reason to rejoice in his compliance. When the work was finished, Dr. Watts revised as much of it as his health would permit. This book was not only well received by the dissenters, but met with an equal reception, and the warmest applauses, from several per-

sons of great eminence for rank, learning, and piety, both clergy and laity, in the established church. Dr. Thomas Hunt, at that time of Hertford College, but afterwards Canon of Christ Church, and Regius Professor of Hebrew in the University of Oxford, thus expressed himself concerning the same work. "With our thanks for the favour of your good company, be pleased to accept of our most hearty acknowledgments for your kind present of your excellent piece on the Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul: a performance which cannot fail of doing much good in the world, as it is judiciously contrived to engage the attention, and to improve the minds of all sorts of readers; being so plain as to be intelligible to the lowest understanding, at the same time that it is so elegant, as to gratify the highest. You may assure yourself, Sir, that it was not in the power of my most pressing engagements to hinder me from reading such a work as this. Nor would it have been kind to my dear Mrs. Hunt, not to have given her an opportunity of perusing a book, from which I myself had received so much benefit. I therefore no sooner laid it out of my own hands, but I put it into her's, where I afterwards oftentimes found it, and cannot easily tell you how much she was affected by it, nor describe the gratitude she professes to owe to her worthy instructer." The Duchess of Somerset was equally pleased with the work. In a letter written to Dr. Doddridge in 1750, she says, "I had not the pleasure of being acquainted with any of your writings till I was at Bath three years ago, when an old acquaintance, the Dowager Lady Hyndford recommended me to read the Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul; and I may with truth assure you, that I never was so deeply affected with any thing I ever met with as with that book; and I could not be easy till I had given one to every servant in my house, who appeared to be of a serious turn of mind." A person of distinguished literature and goodness always carried the work with him, declaring that it was every thing on the subject of practical religion. It soon went through many editions, and still continues to be frequently reprinted. Nor has the publication of it been confined to England, but extended to Scotland and America. It has been translated abroad, and the author has received many testimonies from foreign parts of its acceptance and usefulness. If to such a number of encomiums the opinion of a dissenting minister may be subjoined, I may give the words of Mr. Barker: "That book should be written in all languages in letters of gold."

In the year 1748 appeared the third volume of the "Family Expositor, containing the Acts of the Apostles, with additional Notes on the Harmony of the Evangelists;" and "Two Dissertations. 1. On Sir Isaac Newton's System of the Harmony. 2. On the Inspiration of the New Testament."

In December, 1750, he was called upon to pay the last tribute of respect to the memory of his friend and father, Dr. Clark. That gentleman died on the fourth of the month, and on the sixteenth, Dr. Doddridge preached his funeral sermon at St. Alban's. The journey which he took to St. Alban's for the purpose of preaching Dr. Clark's Funeral Sermon, laid the foundation of his own death. In that journey he unhappily contracted a cold, that hung upon him during the remainder of the winter. When the spring advanced, the disorder considerably abated; but in the summer it returned again with great violence. In this state of his health, he was advised by his physicians and friends to lay aside his public work for a time, and to apply himself to the use of proper medicine and exercise for the removal of his complaint. With the former part of this advice he could not be prevailed upon to comply; for, in his estimation, to be useless was worse

than death. Whilſt he apprehended that there was no immediate danger, he could not be induced to decline, nor even to leſſen the various ſacred employments in which he ſo much delighted; and he was particularly deſirous to complete the fair tranſcript of his Family Expoſitor. The nearer he approached to his diſſolution, the more plainly was obſerved his continual improvement in a ſpiritual and heavenly temper. Indeed, he ſeemed to have gotten above the world, and to be daily breathing after immortality. This diſpoſition of his mind was ardently expreſſed in ſeveral of his letters, and is manifeſt from his will, which was made at this time, and is prefaced in the following language:—"Whereas it is cuſtomary on theſe occaſions to begin with commending the ſoul into the hands of God through Chriſt; I do it not in mere form, but with ſincerity and joy; eſteeming it my greateſt happineſs, that I am taught and encouraged to do it, by that glorious goſpel, which, having moſt aſſuredly believed, I have ſpent my life in preaching to others; and which I eſteem an infinitely greater treaſure than all my little worldly ſtore, or poſſeſſions ten thouſand times greater than mine."

The laſt time that Dr. Doddridge adminiſtered the Lord's Supper to his congregation at Northampton, was on the ſecond of June, 1751. In the ſermon which he delivered previouſly to the celebration of the ordinance, and which was from Hebrews xii. 23, he expatiated on the illuſtrious and innumerable aſſembly that would meet together in the celeſtial world; and in the concluſion of the whole ſervice, he mentioned, with marks of uncommon pleaſure, the authority of Chriſt over miniſters and churches. He dropped, likewiſe, ſome hints of his approaching deceaſe, and ſpoke with great tenderneſs and affection to his people on the proſpect of their final ſeparation. After this he ſpent ſome weeks in London, where the hurries and fatigues he went through contributed to increaſe his diſorder. On his return from the metropolis, which was nearly the middle of July, he determined to addreſs his flock once more from the pulpit. The diſcourſe, which proved in fact to be his farewell ſermon, was from Romans xiv. 8.

Whilſt he was at Shrewſbury, he received many letters from his friends, expreſſive of their high eſteem and affection for him, and of their deep concern for his dangerous illneſs. A very pathetic one, written by Mr. Neal, is as follows:—"You may be ſure, we are all greatly affected with the danger that threatens a life ſo univerſally deſirable, and to us ſo peculiarly endeared: and our invaluable friend, Mr. Barker, diſſolved not only us, but great part of his numerous audience, into tears, by a kind of inſpired eloquence, with which he offered up ſtrong pleas and cries, for your ſupport and revival, to Him who is able to deliver from death.—My dear friend, I beſeech you not to think of returning to Northampton, even though you ſhould receive all imaginable benefit at Shrewſbury in the enſuing fortnight, till you have viſited Briſtol; and in preparing for that expedition, I conceive no time ſhould be loſt, as the ſeaſon for the waters, as well as of the year, is ſo far advanced. I ſhould tremble for your return to Northampton at preſent, notwithſtanding ſome encouraging ſymptoms; for a relapſe could hardly fail of being fatal, and in ſuch a circumſtance would be next to certain, conſidering your various engagements and active temper." Speaking of the academy, Mr. Neal adds, "Mr Clark, I am perſuaded, is able to do what is fully ſufficient, and will be very acceptable to the truſtees. And I rejoice in his ability (which I do not at all diſtruſt) to keep the pupils very profitably employed for ſome time; though I ſhould much rather hear the academy was all diſbanded, than that you ſhould read a ſingle lecture between this and Michaelmas. In one word, your whole duty to God

and man is comprehended in the care of your health." Another letter written some weeks before by Mr. Barker, is too interesting to be omitted in this place. "Lessingham, Neal and Barker, are too nearly interested in that precious life, which now appears in danger of being cut off in the midst of its days, to hear of its waste and languishing without great concern and fervent prayer to God. How your letter affected my heart in public, your friends are witness: but what I felt for my dear brother and the ministers and churches of Christ, God and myself only know. I will not now say, Why did you spend so fast? Why did you not spare yourself a little sooner? I will rather heartily thank you, that you use all the means you can to repair your frame, and restore and prolong your usefulness. It is the kindest thing you can do, and the highest instance of friendship you can now show us; and I acknowledge your goodness to us in this point with tears of joy. Consent and choose to stay with us a while longer, my dear friend, if it please God This is not only needful to Northampton and its adjacent towns and villages, but desirable to us all, and beneficial to our whole interest. Stay, Doddridge! O, stay and strengthen our hands, whose shadows grow long. Fifty is but the height of vigour, usefulness, and honour. Don't take leave abruptly. Providence hath not directed thee yet on whom to drop thy mantle. Who shall instruct our youth; fill our vacant churches; animate our associations, and diffuse a spirit of piety, moderation, candour, and charity, through our villages and churches, and a spirit of prayer and supplication into our towns and cities, when thou art removed from us? Especially, who shall unfold the sacred Oracles, teach us the meaning and use of our Bibles, rescue us from the bondage of systems, party opinions, empty, useless speculations, and fashionable forms and phrases; and point out to us the simple, intelligible, consistent, uniform religion of our Lord and Saviour? Who shall—But I am silenced by the voice of Him, who says, "Shall I not do what I will with my own? Is it not my prerogative to take and leave, as seemeth me good? I demand the liberty of disposing of my own servants at my own pleasure. He hath laboured more abundantly. His times are in my hand. He hath not slept as do others. He hath risen to nobler heights than things below. He hopes to inherit glory. He hath laboured for that which endureth to eternal life; labour, which the more it abounds, the more it exalts and magnifies its objects, and the more effectually answers and secures its end. It is yours to wait and trust,—mine to dispose and govern. On me be the care of ministers and churches. With me is the residue of the Spirit. Both the vineyard and the labourers are mine. I set them to work; and when I please, I call them and give them their hire."—With these thoughts, my passions subside, my mind is softened and satisfied, I resign thee, myself and all to God, saying, Thy will be done! But now for the wings of faith and contemplation. Let me take thy hand, my dear brother, and walk a turn or two in yonder spacious regions. Yes, it is so: we read it in the Book of God, that word of truth and gospel of our salvation, that as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. The one ruined his posterity by sin; the other raised his seed to immortality. This poisoned the dart and inflamed the wound of death; but Jesus Christ redeemeth us from this captivity. See, thou Christian minister, thou friend of my bosom, and faithful servant of God, see the important period, when the surprising signs and descending inhabitants of heaven, proclaim the second coming of our divine Saviour! The heavens open and disclose his radiant glory. Hear the awakening trump. See, the dead in Christ arise glorious and immortal; leave corruption, weakness and dishonour behind them, and behold their

Lord and Head ſeated on his throne of judgment, attended and ſurrounded with the miniſters of his power and pleaſure, and ſhining in all the fulneſs of celeſtial glory; and not only ſee, but ſhare his victory and luſtre, partake of his image and influence. And behold the demoliſhed fabric reared again, ſtately and ornamented, ſhining and illuſtrious, permanent and durable, to demonſtrate how entirely death is vanquiſhed, all its ruins repaired; and what was once meat for worms is now a companion of angels: for when "this corruptible ſhall have put on incorruption, and this mortal, immortality," every eye will be faſtened on the mighty Conqueror, and every voice and harp be tuned for that tranſporting ſong, "O Death, where is thy ſting? O Grave, where is thy victory?" Yes, Doddridge, it is ſo. The fruit of our Redeemer's ſufferings and victory is the entire and eternal deſtruction of ſin and death. And is it not a glorious deſtruction? A moſt bleſſed ruin? No enemy ſo formidable, no tyranny ſo bitter, no fetters ſo heavy and galling, no priſon ſo dark and diſmal, but they are vanquiſhed and diſarmed; the unerring dart is blunted and broken, the priſon pulled down and raſed. Our Lord is riſen, as the firſt fruits of them that ſlept.—How glad ſhould I be to hear that GOD is pleaſed to prolong thy life on earth, to declare theſe glorious truths, and teach us to improve them! In this your friends with you, and many more in every place, join, and make it our common petition to the great Diſpoſer of all events. Uſe every means you can for the recovery of your health, for the ſake of your friends, among whom is your faithful and affectionate J. BARKER.

Dr. Doddridge was ſo deeply affected with the friendſhip expreſſed in this letter, and the divine conſolations which it adminiſtered, that there was reaſon to be apprehenſive that his tender frame would have ſunk under the emotions of his gratitude and joy.

In September, Dr. Doddridge's health continuing to decline, and deriving no advantages from the beſt medical advice, or the waters of Briſtol, which his phyſicians judged proper he ſhould make trial of, it was propoſed, as the laſt reſort in ſo threatening a diſorder, that he ſhould go to Liſbon. The moſt generous aid was rendereed him by gentlemen of all denominations to make his journey and voyage comfortable. After a fatiguing journey to Falmouth, he went on board the Packet at that place the 16th of September; and on the 13th of October landed in Liſbon, where he was kindly received and entertained by Mr. David King, an Engliſh merchant. But his complaints continuing to increaſe, his little ſtrength was ſoon exhauſted, and on the 26th of October, this good man obtained his releaſe from this tranſitory world, at the age of 49 years and four months. Though he died in a foreign land, and in a certain ſenſe among ſtrangers, his deceaſe was embalmed with many tears. Not only the principal gentlemen of the Engliſh factory, but even their ſervants, manifeſted a high ſenſe of Dr. Doddridge's worth and of the greatneſs of the public loſs. His remains were interred in the burying ground belonging to the Factory at Liſbon, with as much decency and reſpect as the circumſtances would admit.

Dr. Doddridge was not handſome in his perſon. In ſtature he was ſomewhat above the middle ſize, with a ſtoop in his ſhoulders, and he was very thin and ſlender. But when he was engaged in converſation, or employed in the pulpit, there was a remarkable ſprightlineſs and vivacity in his countenance and manner, which commanded a general attention. Mrs. Doddridge ſurvived her huſband nearly forty years, all which time ſhe exhibited an eminent pattern of the Chriſtian virtues. The Doctor left four children, one ſon, and three daughters.

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THE

RISE AND PROGRESS

OF

Religion in the Soul.

CHAP. I.

Introduction to the Work, with some general Account of its Design.

That true religion is very rare, appears from comparing the nature of it with the lives and characters of men around us, 1, 2. The want of it matter of just lamentation, 3. To remedy this evil is the design of the ensuing treatise, 4. To which, therefore, the author earnestly bespeaks the attention of the reader, as his own heart is deeply interested in it, 5, 6. A general plan of the work, of which the fifteen first chapters relate chiefly to the RISE of Religion, and the remaining chapters to its PROGRESS, 7—12. The chapter concludes with a prayer for the success of the work.

1. WHEN we look round about us with an attentive eye, and consider the characters and pursuits of men, we plainly see, that though, in the original constitution of their natures, they only, of all the creatures that dwell on the face of the earth, be capable of religion, yet many of them shamefully neglect it. And whatever different notions people may entertain of what they call religion, all must agree in owning, that it is very far from being an universal thing.

2. Religion, in its most general view, is such a sense of God on the soul, and such a conviction of our obligations to him, and of our dependence upon him, as shall engage us to make it our great care to conduct ourselves in a manner which we have reason to believe will be pleasing to him. Now, when we have given this plain account of

religion, it is by no means neceſſary that we ſhould ſearch among the ſavages of the African or American nations, to find inſtances of thoſe who are ſtrangers to it. When we view the conduct of the generality of people at home, in a Chriſtian and Proteſtant nation, in a nation whoſe obligations to God have been ſingular, almoſt beyond thoſe of any other people under heaven, will any one preſume to ſay, that religion has an univerſal reign among us? Will any one ſuppoſe that it prevails in every life? that it reigns in every heart? Alas! the avowed infidelity, the profanation of the name and day of God, the drunkenneſs, the lewdneſs, the injuſtice, the falſehood, the pride, the prodigality, the baſe ſelfiſhneſs, the ſtupid inſenſibility of the ſpiritual and eternal intereſts of themſelves and others, which ſo generally appear among us, loudly proclaim the contrary. So that one would imagine, upon this view, that thouſands and ten thouſands thought the neglect, and even the contempt, of religion were a glory rather than a reproach. And where is the neighbourhood, where is the ſociety, where is the happy family (conſiſting of any conſiderable number) in which, on a more exact examination, we find reaſon to ſay, "Religion fills even this little circle?"—There is, perhaps, a freedom from any groſs and ſcandalous immoralities, an external decency of behaviour, an attendance on the outward forms of worſhip in public, and (here and there) in the family; yet amidſt all this, there is nothing which looks like the genuine actings of the ſpiritual and divine life. There is no appearance of love to God, no reverence for his preſence, no deſire of his favour as the higheſt good; there is no cordial belief of the goſpel of ſalvation; no eager ſolicitude to eſcape that condemnation which we have incurred by ſin; no hearty concern to ſecure that eternal life which Chriſt has purchaſed and ſecured for his people, and which he freely promiſes to all who will receive him. Alas! whatever the love of a friend, or even of a parent can do; whatever inclination there may be to hope all things, and believe all things the moſt favourable; evidence to the contrary will force itſelf upon the mind, and extort the unwilling concluſion, that, whatever elſe may be amiable in this dear friend, in that favourite child, "religion dwells not in its breaſt."

3. To a heart that firmly believes the gospel, and views persons and things in the light of eternity, this is one of the most mournful considerations in the world. And indeed to such an one, all the other calamities and evils of human nature appear trifles when compared with this, the absence of real religion, and that contrariety to it, which reigns in so many thousands of mankind. Let this be cured, and all the other evils will easily be borne; nay, good will be extracted out of them; but if this continue, it *bringeth forth fruit unto death:* and, in consequence of it, multitudes who share the entertainments of an indulgent providence with us, and are at least allied to us by the bond of the same common nature, must in a few years be swept away into *utter destruction*, and be plunged beyond redemption *into everlasting burnings*.

4. I doubt not but that there are many, under those various forms of religious profession, which have so unhappily divided us in this nation, who are not only lamenting this in public, if their office in life calls them to an opportunity of doing it, but are likewise mourning before God in secret, under a sense of this sad state of things; and who can appeal to Him who searches all hearts, as to the sincerity of their desires to revive the languishing cause of vital Christianity and substantial piety; and, among the rest, the author of this treatise may with confidence say, It is this which animates him to the present attempt, in the midst of so many other cares and labours: for this, he is willing to lay aside many of those curious amusements in science which might suit his own private taste, and perhaps open a way to some reputation in the learned world: for this, he is willing to wave the laboured ornaments of speech, that he may, if possible, descend to the capacity of the lowest part of mankind: for this, he would endeavour to convince the judgment, and to reach the heart, of every reader: and, in a word, for this, without any dread of the name of an enthusiast, whoever may at random throw it out upon the occasion, he would, as it were, enter with you into your closet from day to day, and with all plainness and freedom, as well as seriousness, would discourse to you of the great things which he has learned from the Christian Revelation, and on which he assuredly knows your everlasting happiness to depend:

that if you hitherto have lived without religion, you may now be awakened to the conſideration of it, and may be inſtructed in its nature and importance; or that, if you are already, through divine grace, experimentally acquainted with it, you may be aſſiſted to make a greater progreſs.

5. But he earneſtly entreats this favour of you, that, as it is plainly a ſerious buſineſs we are entering upon, you would be pleaſed to give him a ſerious and an attentive hearing.—He entreats that theſe addreſſes, and theſe meditations, may be peruſed at leiſure, and be thought over in retirement; and that you would do him and yourſelf the juſtice to believe the repreſentations which are here made, and the warnings which are here given, to proceed from ſincerity and love; from an heart which would not deſignedly give one moment's unneceſſary pain to the meaneſt creature on the face of the earth, and much leſs to any human mind. If he be importunate, it is becauſe he at leaſt imagines that there is juſt reaſon for it; and fears, leſt amidſt the multitudes who are undone by the utter neglect of religion, and among thoſe who are greatly damaged for want of a more reſolute and conſtant attendance to it, this may be the caſe of ſome into whoſe hands this treatiſe may fall.

6. He is a barbarian, and deſerves not to be called a man, who can look on the ſorrows of his fellow-creatures without drawing out his ſoul unto them, and wiſhing, at leaſt, that it were in the power of his hand to help them. Surely earth would be an heaven to that man, who could go about from place to place, ſcattering happineſs wherever he came, though it were only the body that he were capable of relieving, and though he could impart nothing better than the happineſs of a mortal life. But the happineſs riſes in proportion to the nature and degree of the good which he imparts. Happy, are we ready to ſay, were thoſe honoured ſervants of Chriſt, who, in the early days of his church, were the benevolent and ſympathiſing inſtruments of conveying miraculous healing to thoſe whoſe caſes ſeemed deſperate; who poured in upon the blind and the deaf the pleaſures of light and ſound, and called up the dead to the powers of action and enjoyment. But this is an honour and happineſs which it is not

fit for God commonly to beſtow on mortal men. Yet there have been in every age, and bleſſed be his name there ſtill are thoſe, whom he has condeſcended to make his inſtruments in conveying nobler and more laſting bleſſings than theſe to their fellow-creatures. Death hath long ſince veiled the eyes and ſtopped the ears of thoſe, who were the ſubjects of miraculous healing, and recovered its empire over thoſe who were once recalled from the grave. But the ſouls who are prevailed on to receive the goſpel, live for ever. God has owned the labours of his faithful miniſters in every age to produce thoſe bleſſed effects; and ſome of them *being dead, yet ſpeak* with power and ſucceſs in this important cauſe. Wonder not then if, living and dying, I be ambitious of this honour; and if *my mouth be freely opened*, where I can truly ſay, *my heart is enlarged*.

7. In forming my general plan, I have been ſolicitous that this little treatiſe might, if poſſible, be uſeful to all its readers, and contain ſomething ſuitable to each. I will therefore take the man, and the Chriſtian, in a great variety of circumſtances. I will firſt ſuppoſe myſelf addreſſing one of the vaſt number of thoughtleſs creatures, who have hitherto been utterly unconcerned about religion, and will try what can be done by all plainneſs and earneſtneſs of addreſs, to awaken him from his fatal lethargy, to a care (chap. 2.) an affectionate and immediate care about it, (chap. 3.) I will labour to fix a deep and awful conviction of guilt upon his conſcience, (chap. 4.) and to ſtrip him of his vain excuſes and his flattering hopes, (chap. 5.) I will read to him, O! that I could fix on his heart that ſentence, that dreadful ſentence, which a righteous and an Almighty God hath denounced againſt him as a ſinner, (chap. 6.) and endeavour to ſhow him in how helpleſs a ſtate he lies under this condemnation, as to any capacity he has of delivering himſelf, (chap. 7.) But I do not mean to leave any in ſo terrible a ſituation! I will joyfully proclaim *the glad tidings of pardon and ſalvation by Chriſt Jeſus our Lord*, which is all the ſupport and confidence of my own ſoul; (chap. 8.) and then I will give ſome general view of the way by which this ſalvation is to be obtained; (chap. 9.) urging the ſinner to accept

of it as affectionately as I can, (chap. 10.) though nothing can be ſufficiently pathetic, where, as in this matter, the life of an immortal ſoul is in queſtion.

8. Too probable it is, that ſome will, after all this, remain inſenſible; and therefore, that their ſad caſe may not incumber the following articles, I ſhall here take a ſolemn leave of them; (chap. 11.) and then ſhall turn and addreſs myſelf, as compaſſionately as I can, to a moſt contrary character; I mean, to a ſoul overwhelmed with a ſenſe of the greatneſs of its ſins, and trembling under the burden as if there were no more hope for him in God, (chap. 12.) And that nothing may be omitted which may give ſolid peace to the troubled ſpirit, I ſhall endeavour to guide its inquiries as to the evidences of ſincere repentance and faith; (chap. 13.) which will be farther illuſtrated by a more particular view of the ſeveral branches of the Chriſtian temper; ſuch as may ſerve at once to aſſiſt the reader in judging what he is, and to ſhow him what he ſhould labour to be, (chap 14.) This will naturally lead to a view of the need we have of the influences of the bleſſed Spirit to aſſiſt us in the important and difficult work of the true Chriſtian; and of the encouragement we have to hope for theſe divine aſſiſtances, (chap. 15.) In an humble dependence on which, I ſhall then enter on the conſideration of ſeveral caſes, which often occur in the Chriſtian life, in which particular addreſſes to the conſcience may be requiſite and uſeful.

9. As ſome peculiar difficulties and diſcouragements attend the firſt entrance on a religious courſe, it will here be our firſt care to animate the young convert againſt them, (chap. 16.) And that it may be done more effectually, I ſhall urge a ſolemn dedication of himſelf to God, (chap. 17.) to be confirmed by entering into the full communion of the church by an approach to the ſacred table, (chap. 18.) That theſe engagements may be more happily fulfilled, we ſhall endeavour to draw a more particular plan of that devout, regular, and accurate courſe which ought daily to be attended to; (chap. 19.) and becauſe the idea will probably riſe ſo much higher than what is the general practice, even of good men, we ſhall endeavour to perſuade the reader to make the attempt, hard as it may ſeem, (chap. 20.) and ſhall caution him againſt various

temptations, which might otherwiſe draw him aſide to negligence and ſin. (chap. 21.)

10. Happy will it be for the reader, if theſe exhortations and cautions be attended to with becoming regard; but, as it is, alas! too probable, that, notwithſtanding all, the infirmities of nature will ſometimes prevail, we ſhall conſider the caſe of deadneſs and languor in religion, which often ſteals upon us by inſenſible degrees, chap. 22. (from whence there is too eaſy a paſſage to that terrible one of a return unto known and deliberate ſin, (chap. 23.) And as the one or the other of theſe tends, in a proportionable degree, to provoke the bleſſed God to hide his face, and his injured Spirit to withdraw, that melancholy condition will be taken into a particular ſurvey, (chap. 24.) I ſhall then take notice alſo of the caſe of great and heavy afflictions in life, (chap. 25.) a diſcipline which the beſt of men have reaſon to expect, eſpecially when they backſlide from God, and yield to their ſpiritual enemies.

11. Inſtances of this kind will, I fear, be too frequent; yet, I truſt, there will be many others, *whoſe path, like the dawning light, will ſhine more and more unto the perfect day.* And therefore we ſhall endeavour, in the beſt manner we can, to aſſiſt the Chriſtian in paſſing a true judgment on the growth of grace in his heart, (chap. 26.) as we had done before in judging of its ſincerity. And as nothing conduces more to the advancement of grace than the lively exerciſe of love to God, a holy joy in him, we ſhall here remind the real Chriſtian of thoſe mercies which tend to excite that love and joy, (chap. 27.) and, in the views of them, to animate him to thoſe vigorous efforts of uſefulneſs in life, which ſo well become his character, and will have ſo happy an efficacy in brightening his crown. (chap. 28.) Suppoſing him to act accordingly, we ſhall then labour to illuſtrate and aſſiſt the delight with which he may look forward to the awful ſolemnities of death and judgment, (chap. 29) and ſhall cloſe the ſcene by accompanying him, as it were, to the neareſt confines of that dark valley, through which he is to paſs to glory; giving him ſuch directions as may ſeem moſt ſubſervient to his honouring God, and adorning religion, by his dying behaviour, (chap. 30.) Nor am I without a pleaſing hope, that, through the divine bleſſing and grace, I may be in

ſome inſtances ſo ſucceſsful as to leave thoſe triumphing in the views of judgment and eternity, and glorifying God by a truly Chriſtian life and death, whom I found trembling in the apprehenſions of future miſery; or perhaps in a much more dangerous and miſerable circumſtance than that; I mean, entirely forgetting the proſpect, and ſunk into the moſt ſtupid inſenſibility of thoſe things, for an attendance to which the human mind was formed, and in compariſon of which all the purſuits of this tranſitory life are emptier than wind, and lighter than a feather.

12. Such a variety of heads muſt, to be ſure, be handled but briefly, as we intend to bring them within the bulk of a moderate volume. I ſhall not, therefore, diſcuſs them, as a preacher might properly do in ſermons, in which the truths of religion are profeſſedly to be explained and taught, defended, and improved, in a wide variety, and long detail of propoſitions, arguments, objections, replies, and inferences, marſhalled, and numbered under their diſtinct generals. I ſhall here ſpeak in a looſer and freer manner, as a friend to a friend; juſt as I would do if I were to be in perſon admitted to a private audience by one whom I tenderly loved, and whoſe circumſtance and character I knew to be like that which the title of one chapter or another of this treatiſe deſcribes. And when I have diſcourſed with him a little while, which will ſeldom be ſo long as half an hour, I ſhall, as it were, ſtep aſide, and leave him to meditate on what he has heard, or endeavour to aſſiſt him, in ſuch fervent addreſſes to God as it may be proper to mingle with thoſe meditations. In the mean time, I will here take the liberty to pray over my reader, and my work, and to commend it ſolemnly to the divine bleſſing, in token of my deep conviction of an entire dependence upon it. And I am well perſuaded, that ſentiments like theſe are common, in the general, to every faithful miniſter, to every real Chriſtian.

A PRAYER for the Succeſs of this Work, in promoting the Riſe and Progreſs of Religion.

O THOU great eternal Original, and Author of all created being and happineſs! I adore thee, who haſt made a creature capable of religion, and haſt beſtowed this dig-

nity and felicity upon our nature, that it may be taught to ſay, *Where is God our Maker?* I lament that degeneracy ſpread over the whole human race, which has *turned our glory into ſhame*, and has rendered the forgetfulneſs of God (unnatural as it is) ſo common, and ſo univerſal a diſeaſe.... Holy Father, we know it is thy preſence, and thy teaching alone, that can reclaim thy wandering children; can impreſs a ſenſe of divine things on the heart, and render that ſenſe laſting and effectual. From thee proceed all good purpoſes and deſires; and this deſire, above all, of diffuſing wiſdom, piety, and happineſs in this world, which (though ſunk in ſuch deep apoſtaſy) thine infinite mercy has not utterly forſaken.

Thou knoweſt, O Lord, the hearts of the children of men; and an upright ſoul, in the midſt of all the cenſures and ſuſpicions it may meet with, rejoices in thine intimate knowledge of its moſt ſecret ſentiments and principles of action. Thou knoweſt the ſincerity and fervency with which thine unworthy ſervant deſires to ſpread the knowledge of thy name, and the ſavour of thy goſpel, among all to whom this work may reach. Thou knoweſt, that hadſt thou given him an abundance of this world, it would have been, in his eſteem, the nobleſt pleaſure that abundance could have afforded, to have been thine almoner, in diſtributing thy bounties to the indigent and neceſſitous, and ſo cauſing the ſorrowful heart to rejoice in thy goodneſs diſpenſed through his hands. Thou knoweſt, that hadſt thou given him, either by ordinary or extraordinary methods, the gift of healing, it would have been his daily delight to relieve the pains, the maladies, and the infirmities of men's bodies; to have ſeen the languiſhing countenance brightened by returning health and cheerfulneſs; and much more to have beheld the roving, diſtracted mind reduced to calmneſs and ſerenity, in the exerciſe of its rational faculties. Yet happier, far happier will he think himſelf, in thoſe humble circumſtances in which thy providence hath placed him, if thou vouchſafe to honour theſe his feeble endeavours as the means of relieving and enriching men's minds; of recovering them from the madneſs of a ſinful ſtate, and bringing back thy reaſonable creatures to the knowledge, the ſervice, and the enjoyment of their God; or of improving thoſe who are already reduced.

O may it have that bleſſed influence on the perſon, whomſoever he be, that is now reading theſe lines, and on all who may read or hear them! Let not my Lord be angry, if I preſume to aſk, that, however weak and contemptible this work may ſeem in the eyes of the children of this world, and however imperfect it really be, as well as the author of it unworthy, it may nevertheleſs live before thee; and through a divine power, be mighty to produce the riſe and progreſs of religion in the minds of multitudes, in diſtant places and in generations yet to come! Impute it not, O God, as a culpable ambition, if I deſire, that whatever becomes of my name, about which I would not loſe one thought before thee, that work, to which I am now applying myſelf, in thy ſtrength, may be completed, and propagated far abroad; that it may reach to thoſe that are yet unborn, and teach them thy name and thy praiſe, when the author has long dwelt in the duſt: That ſo, when he ſhall appear before thee in the great day of final account, his joy may be increaſed, and his crown brightened, by numbers before unknown to each other, and to him! But if this petition be too great to be granted to one who pretends no claim, but thy ſovereign grace, to hope for being favoured with the leaſt, give him to be, in thine Almighty hand, the bleſſed inſtrument of converting and ſaving one ſoul: And if it be but one, and that the weakeſt and meaneſt of thoſe who are capable of receiving this addreſs, it ſhall be moſt thankfully accepted as a rich recompenſe for all the thought and labour it may coſt; and though it ſhould be amidſt a thouſand diſappointments with reſpect to others, yet it ſhall be the ſubject of immortal ſongs of praiſe to thee, O bleſſed God, for and by every ſoul, whom, through the blood of Jeſus, and the grace of thy Holy Spirit, thou haſt ſaved: And everlaſting honours ſhall be aſcribed to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, by the innumerable company of angels, and by the general aſſembly and church of the firſt-born in heaven. *Amen.*

CHAP. II.

The careleſs Sinner awakened.

It is too ſupposeable a case that this treatise may come into such hands, 1, 2. Since many, not grossly vicious, fall under that character, 3, 4. A more particular illustration of this case, with an appeal to the reader whether it be not his own, 5, 6. Expoſtulation with such, 7, 9; more particularly, (1.) From acknowledged principles, relating to the nature of God, his universal presence, agency, and perfections, 10, 12, (2.) From a view of personal obligations to him, 13, (3.) From the danger of this neglect, when considered in its aspect, on a future state, 14. An appeal to the conscience, as already convinced, 15. Tranſition to the subject of the next chapter, 16. The meditation of a sinner, who, having been long thoughtless, begins to be awakened.

1. SHAMEFULLY and fatally as religion is neglected in the world, yet, bleſſed be God, it has ſome ſincere diſciples; children of wiſdom, by whom, even in this fooliſh and degenerate age, it *is juſtified*; who having, by divine grace, been brought to the knowledge of God in Chriſt, have faithfully devoted their hearts to him, and, by a natural conſequence, are devoting their lives to his ſervice. Could I be ſure this treatiſe would fall into no other hands but theirs, my work would be ſhorter, eaſier, and more pleaſant.

2. But, among the thouſands that neglect religion, it is more than poſſible that ſome of my readers may be included: and I am ſo deeply affected with their unhappy caſe, that the temper of my heart, as well as the proper method of my ſubject, leads me in the firſt place, to addreſs myſelf to ſuch; to apply to every one of them, and therefore to you, O reader, whoever you are, who may come under the denomination of *a careleſs ſinner*.

3. Be not, I beſeech you, angry at the name. The phyſicians of ſouls muſt ſpeak plainly, or they may murder thoſe whom they ſhould cure. I would make no harſh and unreaſonable ſuppoſition. I would charge you with nothing more than is abſolutely neceſſary to convince you that you are the perſon to whom I ſpeak. I will not, therefore, imagine you to be a profane and abandoned profligate. I will not ſuppoſe that you allow yourſelf to blaſpheme God, to diſhonour his name by cuſtomary ſwearing, or groſsly to

violate the Sabbath, or commonly to neglect the solemnities of his public worship. I will not imagine that you have injured your neighbours in their lives, their chastity, or their possessions, either by violence, or by fraud; or that you have scandalously debased the rational nature of man by that vile intemperance which transforms us into the worst kind of brutes, or something beneath them.

4. In opposition to all this, I will suppose that you believe the existence and providence of God, and the truth of Christianity as a revelation from him: Of which, if you have any doubt, I must desire that you would immediately seek your satisfaction elsewhere.* I say, immediately; because not to believe it, is, in effect, to disbelieve it; and will make your ruin equally certain, though, perhaps, it may leave it less aggravated, than if contempt and opposition had been added to suspicion and neglect. But, supposing you to be a nominal Christian, and not a Deist or a Sceptic; I will also suppose your conduct among men to be not only blameless, but amiable; and that they who know you most intimately, must acknowledge that you are just and sober, humane and courteous, compassionate and liberal; yet, with all this, you may *lack that one thing*, on which your eternal happiness depends.

5. I beseech you, reader, whoever you are, that you would look seriously into your own heart, and ask it this one plain question—"Am I truly religious? Is the love of God the governing principle of my life? Do I walk under a sense of his presence? Do I converse with him from day to day, in the exercise of prayer and praise? And am I, on the whole, making his service my business and my delight, regarding him as my Master and my Father?"

6. It is my present business only to address myself to the person whose conscience answers in the negative. And I would address myself with equal plainness, and equal freedom, to high and low, to rich and poor, to you who, as the Scripture, with a dreadful propriety, expresses it, *live without God in the world*: and while, in words and forms, you

* In such a case, I beg leave to refer the reader to my Three Sermons on the Evidences of Christianity;† the last of the ten on the Power and Grace of Christ: In which he may see the hitherto unshaken foundation of my own faith, in a short, and, I hope, a clear view.

† *A neat edition of which has been lately published by James Loring, No. 2, Cornhill, Boston.*

own God, and deny him in your actions, and behave yourſelves in the main (a few external ceremonies only excepted) juſt as you would do if you believed and were ſure there was no God.—Unhappy creature, whoever you are! your own heart condemns you immediately; and how much more that *God who is greater than your heart, and knoweth all things.* He is *in ſecret*, as well as in public; and words cannot expreſs the delight with which his children converſe with him alone. But in ſecret you acknowledge him not; you neither pray to him, nor praiſe him in your retirements. Accounts, correſpondencies, ſtudies may often bring you into your cloſet; but if nothing but devotion were to be tranſacted there, it would be to you quite an unfrequented place. And thus you go on from day to day, in a continual forgetfulneſs of God; and are as thoughtleſs about religion, as if you had long ſince demonſtrated to yourſelf that it was a mere dream. If, indeed, you are ſick, you will perhaps cry to God for health; in any extreme danger you will lift up your eyes and voice for deliverance; but as for the pardon of ſin, and the other bleſſings of the goſpel, you are not at all inwardly ſolicitous about them, though you profeſs to believe that the goſpel is divine, and the bleſſings of it eternal. All your thoughts, and all your hours are divided between the buſineſs and amuſements of life; and if, now and then, an awful providence, or a ſerious ſermon or book, awakens you, it is but a few days, or it may be, a few hours, and you are the ſame careleſs creature you ever were before. On the whole, you act as if you were reſolved to put it to the venture, and at your own expenſe to make the experiment, whether the conſequences of neglecting religion be indeed as terrible as its miniſters and friends have repreſented. Their remonſtrances do indeed ſometimes force themſelves upon you, as (conſidering the age and country in which you live) it is hardly poſſible entirely to avoid them; but you have, it may be, found out the art of Iſaiah's people, *Hearing to hear, and not underſtand: And ſeeing to ſee, and not perceive. Your heart is waxed groſs, your eyes are cloſed, and your ears heavy.* Under the very ordinances of worſhip, your thoughts *are at the ends of the earth.* Every amuſement of the imagination is welcome, if it may but lead away your mind from ſo in-

fipid and ſo diſagreeable a ſubject as religion. And probably, the very laſt time you were in a worſhipping aſſembly, you managed juſt as you would have done if you had thought God knew nothing of your behaviour; or as if you did not think it worth one ſingle care whether he were pleaſed or diſpleaſed with it.

7. Alas! is it then come to this, with all your belief of God and providence and ſcripture, that religion is not worth a thought! that it is not worth one hour's ſerious conſideration and reflection, "what God and Chriſt are, and what you yourſelf are, and what you muſt hereafter be?" Where then are all your rational faculties? How are they employed; or rather, how are they ſtupified and benumbed?

8. The certainty and importance of the things of which I ſpeak are ſo evident, from the principles which you yourſelves grant, that one might almoſt ſet a child or an idiot to reaſon upon them; and yet they are neglected by thoſe who are grown up to underſtanding, and perhaps ſome of them to ſuch refinement of underſtanding, that they would think themſelves greatly injured if they were not to be reckoned among the politer and more learned part of mankind.

9. But it is not your neglect, Sirs, that can deſtroy the being or importance of ſuch things as theſe. It may indeed deſtroy you, but it cannot in the leaſt affect them. Permit me, therefore, having been myſelf awakened, to come to each of you, and ſay, as the mariners did to Jonah, while aſleep in the midſt of a much leſs dangerous ſtorm, *What meaneſt thou, O ſleeper? Ariſe, and call upon thy God.* Do you doubt as to the reaſonableneſs, or neceſſity of doing ſo? *I will demand, and anſwer me:* Anſwer me to your own conſcience, as one that muſt, ere long, render another kind of account.

10. You own that there is a God, and well you may: For you cannot open your eyes but you muſt ſee the evident proofs of his being, his preſence, and his agency. You behold him around you in every object; you feel him within you, if I may ſo ſpeak, in every vein, and in every nerve: you ſee, and you feel, not only that he hath formed you with an exquiſite wiſdom, which no mortal man could ever fully explain or comprehend; but that he is continually near you, wherever you are, and however you are employ-

ed, by day or by night; *in him you live, and move, and have your being.* Common ſenſe will tell you, that it is not your own wiſdom, and power, and attention, that cauſes your heart to beat, and your blood to circulate; that draws in, and ſends out, that breath of life, that precarious breath of a moſt uncertain life, *that is in your noſtrils.* Theſe things are done when you ſleep, as well as in thoſe waking moments when you think not of the circulation of the blood, nor of the neceſſity of breathing, nor ſo much as recollect that you have a heart and lungs. Now, what is this but the hand of God perpetually ſupporting and actuating thoſe curious machines that he has made?

11. Nor is this his care limited to you; but if you look all around you, far as your views can reach, you ſee it extending itſelf on every ſide; and, O, how much farther than you can trace it! Reflect on the light and heat which the ſun every where diſpenſes; on the air which ſurrounds all our globe, on the right temperature of which the life of the whole human race depends, and that of all the inferior creatures which dwell on the earth. Think of the ſuitable, plentiful proviſion made for man and beaſt: the graſs, the grain, the variety of fruits, herbs and flowers; every thing that nouriſhes and delights us; and ſay, whether it do not ſpeak plainly and loudly that our Almighty Maker is near, and that he is careful of us, and kind to us. And while all theſe things proclaim his goodneſs, do they not alſo proclaim his power? For what power has any thing comparable to that which furniſhes out theſe gifts of royal bounty; and which, unwearied and unchanged, produces continually, from day to day, and from age to age, ſuch aſtoniſhing and magnificent effects over the face of the whole earth, and through all the regions of heaven?

12. It is then evident, that God is preſent, preſent with you at this moment; even God your Creator and Preſerver, God, the Creator and Preſerver of the whole viſible and inviſible world. And is he not preſent as a moſt obſervant and attentive Being? *He that formed the eye, ſhall not he ſee? He that planted the ear, ſhall not he hear? He that teaches man knowledge,* that gives him rational faculties, and pours in on his opening mind all the light it receives by them, *ſhall not he know?* He who ſees all the neceſſities of his creatures, ſo ſeaſonably to provide for them, ſhall he

not see their actions too; and seeing, shall he not judge of them? Has he given us a sense and discernment of what is good and evil, of what is true and false, of what is fair and deformed in temper and conduct; and has he himself no discernment of these things? Trifle not with your conscience, which tells you at once that he judges of it, and approves or condemns, as it is decent or indecent, reasonable or unreasonable; and that the judgment which he passes is of infinite importance to all his creatures.

13. And now to apply all this to your own case, let me seriously ask you, Is it a decent and reasonable thing that this great and glorious Benefactor should be neglected by his rational creatures? by those that are capable of attaining to some knowledge of him, and presenting to him some homage? Is it decent and reasonable that he should be forgotten and neglected by you? Are you alone, of all the works of his hands, forgotten and neglected by him? O sinner, thoughtless as you are, you cannot dare say that, or even to think it. You need not go back to the helpless days of your infancy and childhood, to convince you of the contrary; you need not, in order to this, to recollect the remarkable deliverances which, perhaps, were wrought out for you many years ago. The repose of the last night, the refreshment and comfort you have received this day; yea, the mercies you are receiving this very moment, bear witness to him, and yet you regard him not. Ungrateful creature that you are! could you have treated any human benefactor thus? Could you have borne to neglect a kind parent, or any generous friend, that had but for a few months acted the part of a parent to you; to have taken no notice of him, while in his presence; to have returned him no thanks; to have had no contrivances to make some little acknowledgment for all his goodness? Human nature, bad as it is, is not fallen so low; nay, the brutal nature is not so low as this. Surely every domestic animal around you, must shame such ingratitude. If you do but for a few days take a little notice of a dog, and feed him with the refuse of your table, he will wait upon you, and love to be near you; he will be eager to follow you from place to place; and when after a little absence you return home, will try, by a thousand fond transported motions, to tell you how much he rejoices to see you again. Nay, brutes, far less

ſagacious and apprehenſive, have ſome ſenſe of our kindneſs, and expreſs it after their own way; as the bleſſed God condeſcends to obſerve, in this very view in which I mention it, *the dull ox knows his owner, and the ſtupid aſs his maſter's crib.* What lamentable degeneracy therefore is it, that you do not know, that you, who have been numbered among God's profeſſed people, do not and will not conſider your numberleſs obligations to him?

14. Surely, if you have any ingenuity of temper, you muſt be aſhamed and grieved in the review; but if you have not, give me leave farther to expoſtulate with you on this head, by ſetting it in ſomething of a different light. Can you think yourſelf ſafe while you are acting a part like this? Do you not in your conſcience believe there will be a future judgment? Do you not believe there is an inviſible and eternal world? As profeſſed Chriſtians, we all believe it; for it is no controverted point, but diſplayed in ſcripture with ſo clear an evidence, that, ſubtile and ingenious as men are in error, they have not yet found out a way to evade it. And believing this, do you not ſee that, while you are thus wandering from God, *deſtruction and miſery are in your ways?* Will this indolence and negligence of temper be any ſecurity to you? Will it guard you from death; will it excuſe you from judgment? You might much more reaſonably expect, that ſhutting your eyes would be a defence againſt the rage of a devouring lion; or that looking another way ſhould ſecure your body from being pierced by a bullet or a ſword. When God ſpeaks of the extravagant folly of ſome thoughtleſs creatures, who would hearken to no admonition now, he adds in a very awful manner, *in the latter day they ſhall conſider it perfectly.* And is not this applicable to you? Muſt you not, ſooner or later, be brought to think of theſe things, whether you will or not? And in the mean time, do you not certainly know, that timely and ſerious reflection upon them is, through divine grace, the only way to prevent your ruin?

15. Yes, ſinner, I need not multiply words on a ſubject like this. Your conſcience is already inwardly convinced, though your pride may be unwilling to own it. And, to prove it, let me aſk you one queſtion more: Would you, upon any terms and conſiderations whatever, come to a ref-

olution, absolutely to dismiss all further thoughts of religion and all care about it, from this day and hour, and to abide by the consequences of that neglect? I believe hardly any man living would be bold enough to determine upon this; I believe most of my readers would be ready to tremble at the thought of it.

16. But if it be necessary to take these things into consideration at all, it is necessary to do it quickly; for life itself is not so very long, nor so certain, that a wise man should risk much upon its continuance. And I hope to convince you, when I have another hearing, that it is necessary to do it immediately; and that next to the madness of resolving you will not think of religion at all, is that of saying you will think of it hereafter. In the mean time pause on the hints which have been already given, and they will prepare you to receive what is to be added on that head.

The Meditation of a Sinner, who was once thoughtless, but begins to be awakened.

AWAKE, O my forgetful soul, awake from these wandering dreams; turn thee from this chase of vanity; and for a little while be persuaded, by all these considerations, to look forward, and to look upwards, at least for a few moments. Sufficient are the hours and days given to the labours and amusements of life; grudge not a short allotment of minutes to view thyself and thine own more immediate concerns; to reflect who, and what thou art; how it comes to pass that thou art here, and what thou must quickly be!

It is indeed as thou hast now seen it represented. O my soul, thou art the creature of God, formed and furnished by him, and lodged in a body which he provided, and which he supports; a body in which he intended thee only a transitory abode. O think how soon *this tabernacle must be dissolved*, and thou must *return to God*. And shall He, the one infinite, eternal, ever blessed and ever glorious Being, shall He be least of all regarded by thee? Wilt thou live and die with this character, saying by every action of every day unto God, *Depart from me, for I desire not the knowledge*

of thy ways? The morning, the day, the evening, the night, every period of time has its excuſes for this neglect. But, O my ſoul, what will theſe excuſes appear when examined by his penetrating eye! They may delude me, but they cannot impoſe upon him.

O, thou injured, neglected, provoked Benefactor! when I think but for a moment or two, of all thy goodneſs, I am aſtoniſhed at this inſenſibility which hath prevailed in my heart, and even ſtill prevails. *I bluſh, and am confounded to lift up my face before thee.* On the moſt tranſient review, I ſee that *I have played the fool, that I have erred exceedingly*; and yet this ſtupid heart of mine would make its having neglected thee ſo long, a reaſon for going on to neglect thee. I own it might juſtly be expected that, with regard to thee, every one of thy rational creatures ſhould be all duty and love; that each heart ſhould be full of a ſenſe of thy preſence; and that a care to pleaſe thee ſhould ſwallow up every other care; yet thou *haſt not been in all my thoughts;* and religion, the end and glory of my nature, has been ſo ſtrangely overlooked, that I have hardly ever ſeriouſly aſked my own heart what it is. I know if matters reſt here, I periſh; and yet I feel in my perverſe nature a ſecret indiſpoſition to purſue theſe thoughts; a proneneſs if not entirely to diſmiſs them, yet to lay them aſide for the preſent. My mind is perplexed and divided; but I am ſure thou who madeſt me knoweſt what is beſt for me. I therefore beſeech thee that thou wilt, *for thy name's ſake, lead me and guide me.* Let me not delay till it is forever too late; *pluck me as a brand out of the burning.* O, break this fatal enchantment that holds down my affections to objects which my judgment comparatively deſpiſes; and let me, at length, come into ſo happy a ſtate of mind, that I may not be afraid to think of thee and of myſelf; and may not be tempted to wiſh that thou hadſt not made me, or that thou couldſt forever forget me; that it may not be my beſt hope to periſh like the brutes.

If what I ſhall farther read here be agreeable to truth and reaſon; if it be calculated to promote my happineſs, and is to be regarded as an intimation of thy will and pleaſure to me, O God, let me hear and obey; let the words of thy ſervant, when pleading thy cauſe, be like goads to pierce into my mind; and let me rather feel, and ſmart, than die!

let them be as *nails faſtened in a ſure place:* that whatever myſteries yet unkown, or whatever difficulties there be in religion, if it be neceſſary, I may not finally neglect it; and that if it be expedient to attend immediately to it, I may no longer delay that attendance! And O! let thy grace teach me the leſſon I am ſo ſlow to learn, and conquer that ſtrong oppoſition which I feel in my heart againſt the very thought of it! Hear theſe broken cries, for the ſake of thy Son, who has taught and ſaved many a creature as untractable as I, and can *out of ſtones raiſe up children to Abraham! Amen.*

CHAP. III.

The awakened Sinner urged to immediate Conſideration, and cautioned againſt Delay.

Sinners when awakened, inclinable to diſmiss convictions for the preſent, 1. An immediate regard to religion urged, 2. (1) From the excellency and pleaſure of the thing itſelf, 3. (2.) From the uncertainty of that future time on which ſinners preſume, compared with the ſad conſequences of being cut off in ſin, 4. (3.) From the immutability of God's preſent demands. 5. (4.) From the tendency which delay has to make a compliance with theſe demands more difficult than it is at preſent, 6. (5.) From the danger of God's withdrawing his Spirit, compared with the dreadful caſe of a ſinner given up by it, 7; which probably is now the caſe of many, 8. Since, therefore, on the whole, whatever the event be, delays muſt prove matter of lamentation, 9. The chapter concludes with an exhortation againſt yielding to them, 10: and a prayer againſt temptations of that kind.

1. I HOPE my laſt addreſs ſo far awakened the convictions of my reader, as to bring him to this purpoſe, "That ſome time or other he would attend to religious conſiderations." But give me leave to aſk earneſtly and punctually, "When that ſhall be?"—*Go thy way for this time, and at a more convenient ſeaſon I will ſend for thee,* was the language and the ruin of unhappy Felix, when he trembled under the reaſonings and expoſtulations of the apoſtle. The tempter preſumed not to urge that he ſhould give up all thoughts of repentance and reformation; but only that conſidering the preſent hurry of his affairs (as no doubt they

were many) he ſhould defer it to a longer day. The artifice ſucceeded, and Felix was undone.

2. Will you, reader, diſmiſs me thus? For your own ſake, and out of tender compaſſion to your periſhing, immortal ſoul, I would not willingly take up with ſuch a diſmiſſion and excuſe. No, not though you ſhould fix a time; though you ſhould determine on the next year, or month, or week, or day, I would turn upon you, with all the eagerneſs and tenderneſs of friendly importunity, and entreat you to bring the matter to an iſſue even now; for if you ſay, "I will think on theſe things tomorrow," I ſhall have little hope, and ſhall conclude, that all that I have hitherto urged, and all that you have read, hath been offered and viewed in vain.

3. When I invite you to the care and practice of religion, it may ſeem ſtrange that it ſhould be neceſſary for me affectionately to plead the caſe with you, in order to your immediate regard and compliance. What I am inviting you to is ſo noble and excellent in itſelf, ſo well worthy the dignity of our rational nature, ſo ſuitable to it, ſo manly, and ſo wiſe, that one would imagine you ſhould take fire, as it were, at the very hearing of it; yea, and ſo delightful a view ſhould preſently poſſeſs your whole ſoul with a kind of indignation againſt yourſelf, that you purſued it no ſooner. "May I lift up mine eyes and my ſoul to God? May I devote myſelf to him? May I even now commence a friendſhip with him, a friendſhip which ſhall laſt forever, the ſecurity, the delight, the glory of this immortal nature of mine? And ſhall I draw back, and ſay, Nevertheleſs, let me not commence this friendſhip too ſoon: let me live at leaſt a few weeks or a few days longer without God in the world? Surely it would be much more reaſonable to turn inwardly and ſay, "O, my ſoul, on what vile huſks haſt thou been feeding, while thy heavenly Father hath been forſaken and injured! Shall I deſire to multiply the days of my poverty, my ſcandal, and my miſery?" On this principle, ſurely, an immediate return to God ſhould, in all reaſon, be choſen, rather than to play the fool any longer, and go on a little more to diſpleaſe God, and thereby to ſtarve and wound your own ſoul, even though your continuance in life were ever ſo certain, and your capacity to return to God and your duty ever ſo entirely in your own power now, and in every future moment through ſcores of years to come.

4. But who, or what are you, that you ſhould lay your account for years, or for months to come? *What is your life?* Is it not *even as a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vaniſheth away?* And what is your ſecurity, or what is your peculiar warrant, that you ſhould thus depend upon the certainty of its continuance? and that ſo abſolutely as to venture, as it were, to pawn your ſoul upon it? Why, you will perhaps ſay, "I am young, and in all my bloom and vigour: I ſee hundreds about me, who are more than double my age, and not a few of them who ſeem to think it too ſoon to attend to religion yet." You view the living, and you talk thus; but I beſeech you to think of the dead. Return in your thoughts to thoſe graves, in which you have left ſome of your young companions and your friends. You ſaw them a while ago gay and active; warm with life, and hopes, and ſchemes; and ſome of them would have thought a friend ſtrangely importunate that ſhould have interrupted them, in their buſineſs and their pleaſures, with a ſolemn lecture of death and eternity; yet they were then on the very borders of both. You have ſince ſeen their corpſes, or at leaſt their coffins; and probably carried about with you the badges of mourning which you received at their funerals. Thoſe once vigorous and perhaps beautiful bodies of theirs, now lie mouldering in the duſt, as ſenſeleſs and helpleſs as the moſt decrepit pieces of human nature which fourſcore years ever brought down to it. And what is infinitely more to be regarded, their ſouls, whether prepared for this great change, or thoughtleſs of it, have made their appearance before God, and are, at this moment, fixed either in heaven or in hell. Now let me ſeriouſly aſk you, Would it be miraculous, or would it be ſtrange, if ſuch an event ſhould befal you? How are you ſure that ſome fatal diſeaſe ſhall not this day begin to work in your veins? How are you ſure that you ſhall ever be capable of reading or thinking any more, if you do not attend to what you now read, and purſue the thought which is now offering itſelf to your mind? This ſudden alteration may at leaſt poſſibly happen; and if it does, it will be to you a terrible one indeed. To be thus ſurpriſed into the preſence of a forgotten God; to be torn away, at once, from a world, to which your whole heart and ſoul has been riveted; a world, which has en-

groſſed all your thoughts and cares, all your deſires and purſuits; and be fixed in a ſtate, which you could never be ſo far perſuaded to think of, as to ſpend ſo much as one hour in ſerious preparation for it; how muſt you even ſhudder at the apprehenſion of it, and with what horror muſt it fill you? It ſeems matter of wonder that in ſuch circumſtances, you are not almoſt diſtracted with the thoughts of the uncertainty of life, and are not even ready to die for fear of death. To trifle with God any longer after ſo ſolemn an admonition as this, would be a circumſtance of additional provocation, which, after all the reſt, might be fatal. Nor is there any thing that you can expect in ſuch a caſe, but that he ſhould cut you off immediately, and teach other thoughtleſs creatures, by your ruin, what a hazardous experiment they make when they act as you are acting.

5. And will you, after all, run this deſperate riſk? For what imaginable purpoſe can you do it? Do you think the buſineſs of religion will become leſs neceſſary, or more eaſy by your delay? You know that it will not! You know that whatever the bleſſed God demands now, he will alſo demand twenty or thirty years hence, if you ſhould live to ſee the time. God hath fixed the method in which he will pardon and accept ſinners in his goſpel. And will he ever alter that method? or, if he will not, can men alter it? You like not to think of repenting and humbling yourſelf before God, to receive righteouſneſs and life from his free grace in Chriſt; and you above all diſlike the thought of returning to God in the ways of holy obedience. But will he ever diſpenſe with any of theſe, and publiſh a new goſpel, with promiſes of life and ſalvation to impenitent, unbelieving ſinners, if they will but call themſelves Chriſtians, and ſubmit to a few external rites? How long do you think you might wait for ſuch a change in the conſtitution of things? You know death will come upon you; and you cannot but know in your own conſcience, that a general diſſolution will come upon the world long before God can thus deny himſelf, and contradict all his perfections and all his declarations.

6. Or, if his demands continue the ſame, as they aſſuredly will, do you think any thing which is now diſagreeable to you in them will be leſs diſagreeable hereafter than it is

at present? Shall you live ſinleſs when it is become more habitual to you, and when conſcience is yet more enfeebled and debauched? If you are *running with the footmen and fainting, ſhall you be able to contend with the horſemen?* Surely you cannot imagine it. You would not ſay in any diſtemper which threatened your life, I will ſtay till I grow a little worſe, and then I will apply to a phyſician: I will let my diſeaſe get a little more rooted in my vitals, and then I will try what can be done to remove it. No; it is only where the life of the ſoul is concerned that men think thus wildly: the life and health of the body appear too precious to be thus trifled away.

7. If after ſuch deſperate experiments you are ever recovered, it muſt be by an operation of divine grace on your ſoul yet more powerful and more wonderful, in proportion to the increaſing inveteracy of your ſpiritual maladies. And can you expect that the Holy Spirit ſhould be more ready to aſſiſt you, in conſequence of your having ſo ſhamefully trifled with him and affronted him! He is now, in ſome meaſure, moving on your heart: if you feel any ſecret relentings in it upon what you read, it is a ſign you are not yet utterly forſaken. But who can tell whether theſe are not the laſt touches he will ever give to a heart ſo long hardened againſt him? Who can tell but God may this day *ſwear in his wrath, that you ſhall not enter into his reſt?* I have been telling you that you may immediately die. You own that poſſibly you may. And can you think of any thing more terrible? Yes, ſinner, I will tell you of one thing more dreadful than immediate death, and immediate damnation. The bleſſed God may ſay, *As for that wretched creature, who has ſo long trifled with me, and provoked me, let him ſtill live: Let him live in the midſt of proſperity and plenty: Let him live under the pureſt and moſt powerful ordinances of the goſpel too; that he may abuſe them, to aggravate his condemnation, and die under ſeven-fold guilt and a ſeven-fold curſe. I will not give him the grace to think of his ways for one ſerious moment more; but he ſhall go on from bad to worſe, filling up the meaſure of his iniquities, till death and deſtruction ſeize him in an unexpected hour, and wrath come upon him to the uttermoſt.*

8. You think this is an uncommon caſe: but I fear it is much otherwiſe. I fear there are few congregations where the word of God has been faithfully preached, and where it

has been long deſpiſed, eſpecially by thoſe whom it had once awakened, in which the eye of God does not ſee a number of ſuch wretched ſouls; though it is impoſſible for us to pronounce upon the caſe who they are.

9. I pretend not to ſay how he will deal with you, O reader; whether he will immediately cut you off, or ſeal you up under final hardneſs and impenitency of heart; or whether his grace may, at length, awaken you to conſider your ways, and to return to him, even when your heart is grown yet more obdurate than it is at preſent: for to his almighty grace nothing is hard, not even to transform a rock or marble into a man and a ſaint. But this I will confidently ſay, that if you delay any longer, the time will come when you will bitterly repent of that delay; and either lament it before God in the anguiſh of your heart here, or curſe your own folly and madness in hell; yea, when you will wiſh that, dreadful as hell is, you had rather fallen into it ſooner, than have lived in the midſt of ſo many abuſed mercies, to render the degrees of your puniſhment more inſupportable, and your ſenſe of it more exquiſitely tormenting.

10. I do therefore earneſtly exhort you, in the name of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and by the worth, and if I may ſo ſpeak, by the blood of your immortal and periſhing ſoul, that you delay not a day or an hour longer. Far from *giving ſleep to your eyes, or ſlumber to your eyelids*, in the continued neglect of this important concern, *take with you, words and turn unto the Lord;* and before you quit the place where you now are, fall upon your knees in his ſacred preſence, and pour out your heart in ſuch language, or at leaſt to ſome ſuch purpoſe, as this:

A Prayer for one who is tempted to delay applying to Religion, though under ſome Conviction of its Importance.

O THOU righteous and holy Sovereign of heaven and earth! thou *God in whoſe hand my breath is, and whoſe are all my ways!* I confeſs I have been far from glorifying thee, or conducting myſelf according to the intimations, or the declarations of thy will. I have therefore reaſon to adore thy forbearance and goodneſs, that thou haſt not long

ſince ſtopped my breath, and *cut me off from the land of the living*. I adore thy patience, that I have not, months and years ago, been an inhabitant of hell; where ten thouſand delaying ſinners are now lamenting their folly, and will be lamenting it forever. But, O God, how poſſible is it, that this trifling heart of mine may, at length, betray me into the ſame ruin! and then, alas, into a ruin aggravated by all this patience and forbearance of thine! I am convinced that, ſooner or later, religion muſt be my ſerious care, or I am undone: and yet my fooliſh heart draws back from the yoke: yet I ſtretch myſelf upon the bed of ſloth, and cry out for *a little more ſleep, a little more ſlumber, a little more folding of the hands to ſleep*. Thus does my corrupt heart plead for its own indulgence againſt the convictions of my better judgment. What ſhall I ſay? O Lord, ſave me from myſelf; ſave me from the artifices and deceitfulneſs of ſin; ſave me from the treachery of this perverſe and degenerate nature of mine, and fix upon my mind what I have now been reading!

O Lord, am I not now inſtructed in truths which were before quite unknown? Often have I been warned of the uncertainty of life, and of the greater uncertainty of the day of ſalvation: and I have formed ſome light purpoſes, and have begun to take a few irreſolute ſteps in my way towards a return unto thee. But, alas! I have been only, as it were, fluttering about religion, and have never fixed upon it. All my reſolutions have been ſcattered like ſmoke, or diſperſed like a cloudy vapour before the wind. O, that thou wouldeſt now bring theſe things home to my heart with a more powerful conviction than it hath ever yet felt! O, that thou wouldeſt purſue me with them, even when I flee from them, if I ſhould ever grow mad enough to endeavour to eſcape them any more! May thy Spirit addreſs me in the language of effectual terror; and add all the moſt powerful methods which thou knoweſt to be neceſſary, to awaken me from this lethargy which muſt otherwiſe be mortal! May the ſound of theſe things be in mine ears, *when I go out, and when I come in, when I lie down, and when I riſe up!* And if the repoſe of the night and the buſineſs of the day, be for a while interrupted by the impreſſion, be it ſo, O God! if I may but thereby carry on my buſineſs with thee to better purpoſe, and at length ſecure a repoſe in thee, inſtead of all that terror

which now I find when *I think upon God, and am troubled.* O Lord, *my flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments.* I am afraid left, even now that I have begun to think of religion, thou ſhouldſt cut me off in this critical and important moment, before my thoughts grow to any ripeneſs, and blaſt in eternal death the firſt buddings and openings of it in my mind. But O ſpare me, I earneſtly entreat thee; for thy mercy's ſake, ſpare me a little longer: it may be, through thy grace, I ſhall return. It may be, if thou continueſt thy patience towards me a while longer, there may be ſome better fruit produced by this *cumberer of the ground.* And may the remembrance of that long forbearance which thou haſt already exerciſed towards me, prevent my continuing to trifle with thee, and with my own ſoul. From this day, O Lord, from this hour, from this moment, may I be able to date more laſting impreſſions of religion than have ever yet been made upon my heart by all that I have ever read, or all that I have heard! *Amen.*

CHAP. IV.

The Sinner arraigned and convicted.

Conviction of guilt necessary, 1. A charge of rebellion against God advanced, 2. Where it is shewn, (1.) That all men are born under God's law, 3. (2.) That no man hath perfectly kept it, 4. An appeal to the reader's conscience on this head, that he hath not, 5. (3.) That to have broken it is an evil inexpressibly great, 6. Illustrated by a more particular view of the aggravations of this guilt, arising, (1.) From knowledge, 7. (2.) From divine favours received, 8. (3.) From convictions of conscience overborne, 9. (4) From the strivings of God's Spirit resisted, 10. (5.) From vows and resolutions broken, 11. The charge summed up, and left upon the sinner's conscience, 12. The sinner's confession under a general conviction of guilt.

1. As I am attempting to lead you to true religion, and not merely to ſome ſuperficial form of it, I am ſenſible I can do it no otherwiſe than in the way of deep humiliation. And therefore, ſuppoſing you are perſuaded, through the divine bleſſing on what you have before read, to take it into conſideration, I would now endeavour, in the firſt place, with all the ſerioufneſs I can, to make you heart-

ily ſenſible of your guilt before God. For I well know, that unleſs you are convinced of this, and affected with the conviction, all the proviſions of goſpel grace will be ſlighted, and your ſoul infallibly deſtroyed, in the midſt of the nobleſt means appointed for its recovery. I am fully perſuaded that thouſands live and die in a courſe of ſin, without feeling upon their hearts any ſenſe that they are ſinners, though they cannot, for ſhame, but own it in words. And therefore let me deal faithfully with you, though I may ſeem to deal roughly; for complaiſance is not to give law to addreſſes in which the life of your ſoul is concerned.

2. Permit me, therefore, O ſinner, to conſider myſelf at this time as an advocate for God; as one employed in his name to plead againſt thee, and to charge thee with nothing leſs than being a rebel and a traitor againſt the ſovereign Majeſty of heaven and earth. However thou mayeſt be dignified or diſtinguiſhed among men; if the nobleſt blood run in thy veins; if thy ſeat were among princes, and thine arm were *the terror of the mighty in the land of the living*, it would be neceſſary thou ſhouldſt be told, and told plainly, that thou haſt broken the *law of the King of kings*, and by the breach of it art become obnoxious to his righteous condemnation.

3. Your conſcience tells you that you were born the natural ſubject of God; born under the indiſpenſable obligations of his law. For it is moſt apparent, that the conſtitution of your rational nature, which makes you capable of receiving law from God, binds you to obey it. And it is equally evident and certain, that you have not exactly obeyed this law; nay, that you have violated it in many aggravated inſtances.

4. Will you dare to deny this? Will you dare to aſſert your innocence? Remember, it muſt be a complete innocence; yea, and a perfect righteouſneſs too; or it can ſtand you in no ſtead farther than to prove that, though a condemned ſinner, you are not quite ſo criminal as ſome others, and will not have quite ſo hot a place in hell as they. And when this is conſidered, will you plead not guilty to the charge? Search the records of your own conſcience, for God ſearcheth them; aſk it ſeriouſly, "Have you never in your lives ſinned againſt God?" Solomon declared, that in his day *there was not a juſt man upon the earth who did good*

and ſinned not: and the apoſtle Paul, that *all had ſinned and come ſhort of the glory of God:* that *both Jews and Gentiles* (which you know comprehended the whole human race) *were all under ſin.* And can you pretend any imaginable reaſon to believe the world is grown ſo much better ſince their days, that any ſhould now plead their own caſe as an exception? Or will you, however, preſume to ariſe, in the face of the omniſcient Majeſty of heaven, and ſay, "I am the man."

5. Suppoſing, as before, you have been free from thoſe groſs acts of immorality, which are ſo pernicious to ſociety, that they have generally been puniſhable by human laws; can you pretend that you have not, in ſmaller inſtances, violated the rules of piety, of temperance, and of charity? Is there any one perſon, who has intimately known you, that would not be able to teſtify you had ſaid or done ſomething amiſs? Or, if others could not convict you, would not your own heart do it? Does it not prove you guilty of pride, of paſſion, of ſenſuality, of an exceſſive fondneſs for the world and its enjoyments; of murmuring, or at leaſt of ſecretly repining againſt God under the ſtrokes of an afflictive providence; of miſſpending a great deal of your time; of abuſing the gifts of God's bounty to vain, if not (in ſome inſtances) to pernicious purpoſes; of mocking him when you have pretended to engage in his worſhip, *drawing near to him with your mouth and your lips, while your heart has been far from him?* Does not conſcience condemn you of ſome one breach of the law at leaſt: and, by one breach of it, you are, in a ſenſe, a ſcriptural ſenſe, *become guilty of all;* and are as incapable of being juſtified before God by any obedience of your own, as if you had committed ten thouſand offences. But, in reality, there are ten thouſand and more chargeable to your account. When you come to reflect on all your ſins of negligence, as well as thoſe of commiſſion; on all the inſtances in which you have *failed to do good, when it was in the power of your hand to do it;* on all the inſtances in which acts of devotion have been omitted, eſpecially in ſecret; and on all thoſe caſes in which you have ſhown a ſtupid diſregard to the honour of God, and to the temporal and eternal happineſs of your fellow-creatures; when all theſe, I ſay are reviewed, the number will ſwell beyond poſ-

ſibility of account, and force you to cry out, *Mine iniquities are more than the hairs of my head.* They will appear in ſuch a light before you, that your own heart will charge you with countleſs multitudes: and how much more then *that God, who is greater than your heart, and knoweth all things!*

6. And ſay, ſinner, is it a little thing that you have preſumed to ſet light by the authority of the God of heaven, and to violate his law, if it had been by mere careleſſneſs and inattention? How much more heinous, therefore, is the guilt, when in ſo many inſtances you have done it knowingly and wilfully? Give me leave ſeriouſly to aſk you, and let me entreat you to aſk your own ſoul, *Againſt whom haſt thou magnified thyſelf? Againſt whom haſt thou exalted thy voice*, or lifted up thy rebellious hand? On whoſe law, O ſinner, haſt thou preſumed to trample? and whoſe friendſhip and whoſe enmity haſt thou therefore dared to affront? Is it a man like thyſelf that thou haſt inſulted? Is it only a temporal monarch? Only one *who can kill the body, and then hath no more that he can do?* Nay, ſinner, thou wouldeſt not have dared to treat a temporal prince as thou haſt treated the *King eternal, immortal, and inviſible.* No price could have hired thee to deal by the majeſty of an earthly ſovereign, as thou haſt dealt by thy God, before whom the cherubim and ſeraphim are continually bowing. Not one oppoſing or complaining, diſputing, or murmuring word is heard among all the celeſtial legions, when the intimations of his will are publiſhed to them; and who art thou, O wretched man, who art thou, that thou ſhouldeſt oppoſe and provoke a God of infinite power and terror, who needs but exert one ſingle act of his ſovereign will, and thou art in a moment ſtripped of every poſſeſſion; cut off from every hope; deſtroyed and rooted up from exiſtence, if that were his pleaſure; or, what is inconceivably worſe, conſigned over to the ſevereſt and moſt laſting agonies? Yet this is the God whom thou haſt offended; whom thou haſt affronted to his face; preſumed to violate his expreſs laws in his very preſence: this is the God before whom thou ſtandeſt as a convicted criminal; convicted, not of one or two particular offences, but of thouſands and of ten thouſands: of a courſe and ſeries of rebellions and provocations, in which thou haſt perſiſted, more or leſs, ever ſince thou waſt born: and the particulars of which have been attended

with almoſt every conceivable circumſtance of aggravation. Reflect on particulars, and deny the charge if you can.

7. If knowledge be an aggravation of guilt, thy guilt, O ſinner, is greatly aggravated! For thou waſt born in Immanuel's land, and God hath *written to thee the great things of his law, yet thou haſt accounted them as a ſtrange thing. Thou haſt known to do good, and haſt not done it;* and therefore to thee the omiſſion of it has been ſin indeed. *Haſt thou not known? Haſt thou not heard?* Waſt thou not early taught the will of God in thine infant years? Haſt thou not ſince received repeated leſſons, by which it has been inculcated again and again, in public and in private, by preaching, and reading the word of God? Nay, hath it not been thy duty, in ſome inſtances, ſo plain, that even without any inſtruction at all, thine own reaſon might eaſily have inferred it? And haſt thou not alſo been warned of the conſequences of diſobedience? Haſt thou not *known the righteous judgment of God, that they who commit ſuch things are worthy of death? Yet thou haſt, perhaps, not only done the ſame, but thou haſt taken pleaſure in thoſe that do them;* haſt choſen them for thy moſt intimate friends and companions; ſo as thereby to ſtrenghten, by the force of example and converſe, the hands of each other in your iniquities.

8. Nay more, if divine love and mercy be any aggravation of the ſins committed againſt it, thy crimes, O ſinner, are heinouſly aggravated. Muſt thou not acknowledge it, O fooliſh creature, and unwiſe? Haſt thou not been *nouriſhed and brought up by him as his child, and yet haſt rebelled againſt him?* Did not God *take you out of the womb?* Did he not watch over you in your infant days, and guard you from a multitude of dangers, which the moſt careful parent or nurſe could not have obſerved or warded off? Has he not given you your rational powers? And is it not by him you have been favoured with every opportunity of improving them? Has he not every day ſupplied your wants with an unwearied liberality; and added, with reſpect to many who will read this, the delicacies of life to its neceſſary ſupports? Has he not *heard you cry when trouble came upon you;* and frequently appeared for your deliverance, when in the diſtreſſes of nature you had called upon him for help? Has he not reſcued you from ruin, when it ſeemed juſt ready to ſwallow you up; and healed your diſeaſes, when it ſeem-

ed to all about you, that the *reſidue of your days was cut off in the midſt?* Or, if it had not been ſo, is not this long continued and uninterrupted health, you have enjoyed for ſo many years, to be acknowledged as an equivalent obligation? Look around upon all your poſſeſſions, and ſay, what one thing have you in the world which his goodneſs did not give you, and which he hath not thus far preſerved to you? Add to all this, the kind notices of his will which he hath ſent to you! The tender expoſtulations which he hath uſed with you to bring you to a wiſer and better temper; and the diſcoveries and gracious invitations of his goſpel, which you have heard, and which you have deſpiſed: and then ſay, whether your rebellion has not been aggravated by the vileſt ingratitude, and whether that aggravation can be accounted ſmall?

9. Again, if it be any aggravation of ſin to be committed againſt conſcience, thy crimes, O ſinner, have been ſo aggravated. Conſult the records of it, and then diſpute the fact if you can. *There is a ſpirit in man, and the inſpiration of the Almighty giveth him underſtanding:* and then underſtanding will act, and a ſecret conviction of being accountable to its Maker and Preſerver, is inſeparable from the actings of it. It is eaſy to object to human remonſtrances, and to give things falſe colourings before men; but the heart often condemns while the tongue excuſes. Have you not often found it ſo; has not conſcience remonſtrated againſt your paſt conduct; and have not theſe remonſtrances been very painful too? I have been aſſured by a gentleman of undoubted credit, that when he was in the purſuit of all the gayeſt ſenſualities of life, and was reckoned one of the happieſt of mankind, when he has ſeen a dog come into the room where he was among his merry companions, he has groaned inwardly, and ſaid, "O that I had been that dog!" And haſt thou, O ſinner, felt nothing like this? Has thy conſcience been ſo ſtupified, ſo *ſeared with a hot iron*, that it has never cried out of any of the violence which have been done in it? Has it never warned thee of the fatal conſequences of what thou haſt done in oppoſition to it? Theſe warnings are in effect the voice of God; they are the admonitions which he gave thee by his vicegerent in thy breaſt. And when his ſentence for thy evil works is executed upon thee in everlaſting death, thou ſhalt hear that voice ſpeaking

to thee again in a louder tone, and a ſeverer accent than before: and thou ſhalt be tormented with its upbraidings through eternity, becauſe thou wouldeſt not in time hearken to its admonitions.

10. Let me add farther: If it be any aggravation that ſin has been committed after God has been moving by his Spirit on the mind, ſurely your ſin has been attended with that aggravation too. Under the Moſaic diſpenſation, dark and imperfect as it was, the Spirit ſtrove with the Jews; elſe Stephen could not have charged it upon them, that, through all their generations, *they had always reſiſted him.* Now ſurely we may much more reaſonably apprehend that he ſtrives with ſinners under the goſpel. And have you never experienced any thing of this kind, even when there has been no external circumſtance to awaken you, nor any pious teacher near you? Have you never perceived ſome ſecret impulſe upon your mind, leading you to think of religion, urging you to an immediate conſideration of it, ſweetly inviting you to make trial of it, and warning you that you would lament this ſtupid neglect? O ſinner, why were not theſe happy motions attended to? Why did you not, as it were, ſpread out all the ſails of your ſoul to catch that heavenly, that favourable breeze? But if you have careleſsly neglected it, you have overborne theſe kind influences. How reaſonably then might the ſentence have gone forth in righteous diſpleaſure, *My Spirit ſhall no more ſtrive!* And, indeed, who can ſay, that it is not already gone forth? If you feel no ſecret agitation of mind, no remorſe, no awakening, while you read ſuch a remonſtrance as this, there will be room, great room to ſuſpect it.

11. There is indeed one aggravation more, which may not attend your guilt; I mean, that of being committed againſt ſolemn covenant engagements: a circumſtance that has lain heavy on the conſciences of many, who perhaps in the main ſeries of their lives have ſerved God with great integrity. But let me call you to think to what this is owing. Is it not that you have never perſonally made any ſolemn profeſſion of devoting yourſelf to God at all? have never done any thing which has appeared to your own apprehenſion an action by which you made a covenant with him; though you have heard ſo much of his covenant, though you have been ſo ſolemnly and ſo

tenderly invited to it? And in this view, how monſtrous muſt this circumſtance appear, which at firſt was mentioned as ſome alleviation of guilt! Yet I muſt add, that you are not, perhaps, altogether ſo free from guilt on this head, as you may at firſt imagine. I will not inſiſt on the covenant which your parents made in your name when they devoted you to God in baptiſm; though it is really a weighty matter, and by calling yourſelf a Chriſtian, you have profeſſed to own and avow what they then did; but I would remind you of what may have been more perſonal and expreſs. Has your heart been, even from your youth, hardened to ſo uncommon a degree, that you have never cried to God in any ſeaſon of danger and difficulty, and did you never mingle vows with thoſe cries? Did you never promiſe, that if God would hear and help you in that hour of extremity, you would forſake your ſins, and ſerve him as long as you lived? He heard and helped you, or you had not been reading theſe lines; and, by ſuch deliverance, did, as it were, bind down your vows upon you: and therefore your guilt in the violation of them remains before him, though you are ſtupid enough to forget them. Nothing is forgotten, nothing is overlooked by him; and the day will come when the record ſhall be laid before you too.

12. And now, O ſinner, think ſeriouſly with thyſelf what defence thou wilt make to all this! Prepare thine apology; call thy witneſſes; make thine appeal from him whom thou haſt thus offended, to ſome ſuperior judge, if ſuch there be. Alas, thoſe apologies are ſo weak and vain, that one of thy fellow-worms may eaſily detect and confound them, as I will endeavour preſently to ſhow thee. But thy foreboding conſcience already knows the iſſue. Thou art convicted; convicted of the moſt aggravated offences. Thou *haſt not humbled thine heart, but lifted up thyſelf againſt the Lord of heaven*; and *thy ſentence ſhall come forth from his preſence*. Thou haſt violated his known laws: thou haſt deſpiſed and abuſed his numberleſs mercies: thou haſt affronted conſcience, his vicegerent in thy ſoul: thou haſt reſiſted and grieved his Spirit: thou haſt trifled with him in all thy pretended ſubmiſſions; and, in one word, and that his own, *thou haſt done evil things as thou couldeſt*. Thouſands are, no doubt, already in hell,

whose guilt never equalled thine; and it is astonishing that God has spared thee, to read this representation of the case, or to make any pause upon it. O waste not so precious a moment, but enter as attentively, and humbly as thou canst, into those reflections, which suit a case so lamentable, and so terrible as thine!

Confession of a Sinner convinced in general of his guilt.

O GOD! thou injured Sovereign, thou all-penetrating and Almighty Judge! what shall I say to this charge? Shall I pretend I am wronged by it, and stand on the defence in thy presence? I dare not do it; for *thou knowest my foolishness, and none of my sins are hid from thee.* My conscience tells me, that a denial of my crimes would only increase them, and add new fuel to the fire of thy deserved wrath. *If I justify myself, mine own mouth will condemn me: if I say I am perfect, it will also prove me perverse.* For *innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up: they are,* as I have been told in thy name, *more than the hairs of my head, and therefore my heart faileth me.* I am more guilty than it is possible for another to declare or represent. My heart speaks more than any other accuser. And thou, O Lord, art much *greater than my heart, and knowest all things.*

What has my life been but a course of rebellion against thee? It is not this or that particular action alone I have to lament. Nothing has been right in its principal views and ends. My whole soul has been disordered; all my thoughts, my affections, my desires, my pursuits have been wretchedly alienated from thee. I have acted as if I had hated thee, who art infinitely the loveliest of all beings; as if I had been contriving how I might tempt thee to the uttermost, and weary out thy patience, marvellous as it is. My actions have been evil; my words yet more evil than they; and O, blessed God, my heart how much more corrupt than either! What an inexhausted fountain of sin has there been in it? *A fountain of original corruption,* which mingled its bitter streams with the days of early childhood; and which, alas! flows on, even to this day, beyond what actions or words could express. I see this to have been the case with regard to what I can particularly survey; but, O

how many months and years have I forgotten! concerning which I only know this in the general, that they are much like thoſe I can remember, except it be that I have been growing worſe and worſe, and provoking thy patience more and more, though every new exerciſe of it was more and more wonderful.

And how am I aſtoniſhed that thy forbearance is ſtill continued? It is, *becauſe thou art God, and not man.* Had I, a ſinful worm, been thus injured, I could not have endured it. Had I been a prince, I had long ſince done juſtice on any rebel, whoſe crimes had borne but a diſtant reſemblance to mine. Had I been a parent, I had long ſince caſt off the ungrateful child, who had made me ſuch a return as I have all my life long been making to thee, O thou Father of my ſpirit! The flame of natural affection would have been extinguiſhed, and his ſight and his very name would have become hateful to me. Why then, O Lord, am I not *caſt out from thy preſence?* Why am I not ſealed up under an irreverſible ſentence of deſtruction! That I live, I owe to thine indulgence. But O, if there be yet any way of deliverance, if there be yet any hope for ſo guilty a creature, may it be opened upon me by thy goſpel and thy grace! And if any farther alarm, humiliation, or terror, be neceſſary to my ſecurity and ſalvation, may I meet them, and bear them all. Wound mine heart, O Lord, ſo that thou wilt but afterwards heal it; and break it in pieces, if thou wilt but at length condeſcend to bind it up!

CHAP. V.

The Sinner ſtripped of his vain Pleas.

The vanity of those pleas, which sinners may secretly confide in, so apparent, that they will be ashamed at last to mention them before God, 1, 2. Such as (1) That they descended from pious parents, 3. (2) That they had attended to the speculative part of religion, 4. (3) That they had entertained sound notions, 5. (4) That they had expressed a zealous regard to religion, and attended the outward forms of worship with those they apprehended the purest churches, 6, 7. (5) That they had been free from gross immoralities, 8. (6) That they did not think the consequence of neglecting religion would have been so fatal, 9. (7) That they could not do otherwise than they did, 10. Conclusion, 11: With the meditation of a convinced sinner giving up his vain pleas before God.

1. My laſt diſcourſe left the ſinner in a very alarming and very pitiable circumſtance; a criminal convicted at the bar of God, diſarmed of all pretences to perfect innocence and ſinleſs obedience, and conſequently obnoxious to the ſentence of a holy law, which can make no allowance for any tranſgreſſion; no, not for the leaſt; but pronounces death and a curſe againſt every act of diſobedience: how much more then againſt thoſe numberleſs and aggravated acts of rebellion, of which, O ſinner, thy conſcience hath condemned thee before God! I would hope ſome of my readers will ingeniouſly fall under the conviction, and not think of making any apology; for, ſure I am, that humbly to plead guilty at the divine bar is the moſt decent, and, all things conſidered, the moſt prudent thing that can be done in ſuch an unhappy circumſtance. Yet I know the treachery and the ſelf-flattery of a ſinful and corrupted heart. I know what excuſes it makes, and how, when it is driven from one refuge, it flies to another, to fortify itſelf againſt full conviction, and to perſuade, not merely another, but itſelf, "That, if it has been in ſome inſtances to blame, it is not quite ſo criminal as was repreſented; that there are at leaſt conſiderations that plead in its favour, which, if they cannot juſtify, will, in ſome degree, excuſe." A ſecret reſerve of this kind, ſometimes perhaps ſcarce formed into a diſtinct reflection, breaks the force of conviction, and often prevents that deep humilia-

tion before God, which is the happieſt token of an approaching deliverance. I will therefore examine into ſome of theſe particulars; and for that purpoſe would ſeriouſly aſk thee, O ſinner, what thou haſt to offer in arreſt of judgment? what plea thou canſt urge for thyſelf why the ſentence of God ſhould not go forth againſt thee, and why thou ſhouldſt not fall into the hands of his juſtice?

2. But this I muſt premiſe, that the queſtion is not, how thou wouldſt anſwer to me, a weak and ſinful worm like thyſelf, who am ſhortly to ſtand with thee at the ſame bar: *The Lord grant that I may find mercy of the Lord in that day!* but, what wilt thou reply to thy Judge? What couldſt thou plead if thou waſt now actually before his tribunal, where, to multiply vain words, and to frame idle apologies, would be but to increaſe thy guilt and provocation! Surely the very thought of his preſence muſt ſuperſede a thouſand of thoſe trifling excuſes which now ſometimes impoſe on *a generation that are pure in their own eyes, though they are not waſhed from their filthineſs*; or, while they are conſcious of their own impurities, truſt in *words that cannot profit, and lean upon broken reeds.*

3. You will not, to be ſure, in ſuch a circumſtance, plead "That you are deſcended from pious parents." That was, indeed, your privilege, and *woe be to you that you have abuſed it, and forſaken the God of your fathers.* Iſhmael was immediately deſcended from Abraham, the friend of God; and Eſau was the ſon of Iſaac, who was born according to the promiſe; yet you know, they were both cut off from the bleſſing to which they apprehended they had a kind of hereditary claim. You may remember that our Lord does not only ſpeak of one who could call Abraham father, who was *tormented in flames*; but expreſsly declares, that *many of the children of the kingdom ſhall be ſhut out of it*; and when others come from the moſt diſtant parts to ſit down in it, ſhall be diſtinguiſhed from their companions in miſery only by louder accents of lamentation, and more furious *gnaſhing of the teeth.*

4. Nor will you then preſume to plead, "That you had exerciſed your thoughts about the ſpeculative parts of religion;" for, what end can this ſerve but to increaſe your condemnation? Since you have broken God's law, ſince you have contradicted the moſt obvious and apparent

obligations of religion, to have inquired into it, and argued upon it, is a circumstance that proves your guilt more audacious. What! did you think religion was merely an exercise of men's wit, and the amusement of their curiosity? If you argued about it on the principles of common sense, you must have judged and proved it to be a practical thing; and if it was so, why did not you practise accordingly? You knew the particular branches of it; and why then did you not attend to every one of them? To have pleaded an unavoidable ignorance, would have been the happiest plea that could have remained for you: nay, an actual, though faulty ignorance, would have been some little allay of your guilt. But if, by your own confession, you have known your *Master's will, and have not done it*, you bear witness against yourself, that you deserve to *be beaten with many stripes*.

5. Nor yet, again, will it suffice to say, "That you have had right notions, both of the doctrines and the precepts of religion." Your advantage for practising it was therefore the greater; but understanding and acting right, can never go for the same thing in the judgment of God or of man. In *believing there is one God*, you have done well; but *the devils also believe and tremble*. In acknowledging Christ to be the Son of God, and the Holy One, you have done well too; but, you know, the unclean spirits made this very orthodox confession, and yet they are *reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day*. And will you place any secret confidence in that which might be pleaded by the infernal spirits as well as by you?

6. But, perhaps, you may think of pleading, "That you have actually done something in religion." Having judged what faith was the soundest, and what worship the purest, you entered yourselves into those societies where such articles of faith were professed, and such forms of worship were practised; and amongst these, you have signalized yourselves by the exactness of your attendance, by the zeal with which you have espoused their cause, and by the earnestness with which you have contended for such principles and practices. O sinner, I much fear that this zeal of thine about the circumstantials of religion, will swell thine account rather than be allowed in abatement of it. He that

ſearches thine heart knows from whence it aroſe, and how far it extended. Perhaps he ſees that it was all hypocriſy, an artful veil under which thou waſt carrying on thy mean deſigns for this world, while the ſacred names of God and religion were profaned and proſtituted in the baſeſt manner; and if ſo, thou art curſed with a diſtinguiſhed curſe, for ſo daring an inſult on the divine omniſcience, as well as juſtice. Or perhaps, the earneſtneſs with which you have been *contending for the faith* and worſhip *which was once delivered to the ſaints*, or which, it is poſſible, you may raſhly have concluded to be that, might be mere pride and bitterneſs of ſpirit; and all the zeal you have expreſſed might poſſibly ariſe from a confidence in your own judgment, from an impatience of contradiction, or from a ſecret malignity of ſpirit, which delighted itſelf in condemning, and even in worrying others; yea, which, if I may be allowed the expreſſion, fiercely preyed upon religion, as the tyger upon the lamb, to turn it into a nature moſt contrary to its own. And ſhall this ſcreen you before the great tribunal? Shall it not rather awaken the diſpleaſure it is pleading to avert?

7. But ſay that this your zeal for notions and forms has been ever ſo well intended, and ſo far as it has gone, ever ſo well conducted too; what will that avail towards vindicating thee in ſo many inſtances of negligence and diſobedience as are recorded againſt thee "in the book of God's remembrance?" Were the revealed doctrines of the goſpel to be earneſtly maintained, as indeed they ought, and was the great practical purpoſe for which they were revealed to be forgot? Were the very mint and aniſe and cummin to be tithed, and were *the weightier matters of the law to be omitted;* even that love to God which was its *firſt and great command?* O, how wilt thou be able to vindicate even the juſteſt ſentence thou haſt paſſed on others for their infidelity, or for their diſobedience, without being *condemned out of thine own mouth!*

8. Will you then plead "your fair moral character, your works of righteouſneſs and of mercy?" Had your obedience to the law of God been complete, the plea might be allowed as important and valid; but I have ſuppoſed and proved above, that conſcience teſtifies to the contrary; and thou wilt not now dare to contradict it. I

add farther, had these works of yours, which you now urge, proceeded from a sincere love to God, and a genuine faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, you would not have thought of pleading them any otherwise than as an evidence of your interest in the gospel covenant, and in the blessings of it, procured by the righteousness and blood of the Redeemer: and that faith, had it been sincere, would have been attended with such deep humility, and with such solemn apprehensions of the divine holiness and glory, that, instead of pleading any works of your own before God, you would rather have implored his pardon for the mixture of sinful imperfection attending the very best of them. Now, as you are a stranger to this humble and sanctifying principle (which here, in this address, I suppose my reader to be) it is absolutely necessary you should be plainly and faithfully told, that neither sobriety, nor honesty, nor humanity will justify you before the tribunal of God, when he *lays judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet*, and examines all your actions, and all your thoughts, with the strictest severity. You have not been a drunkard, an adulterer, or a robber. So far it is well. You stand before a righteous God, who will do you ample justice; and therefore will not condemn you for drunkenness, adultery, or robbery. But you have forgotten him, your Parent and your Benefactor; you have *cast off fear, and restrained prayer before him;* you have despised the blood of his Son, and all the immortal blessings which he purchased with it. For this, therefore, you are judged and condemned.—And as for any thing that has looked like virtue and humanity in your temper and conduct, the exercise of it has, in a great measure, been its own reward, if there were any thing more than form and artifice in it; and the various bounties of Divine Providence to you, amidst all your numberless provocations, have been a thousand times more than an equivalent for such defective and imperfect virtues as these. You remain, therefore, chargeable with the guilt of a thousand offences, for which you have no excuse at all; though there are some other instances in which you do not grossly offend. And those good works in which you have been so ready to trust, will no more vindicate you in his awful presence, than a man's kindness to his poor neigh-

bours would be allowed as a plea in arreſt of judgment, when he ſtood convicted of high treaſon againſt his prince.

9. But you will, perhaps, be ready to ſay, "You did not expect all this: you did not think the conſequences of neglecting religion would have been ſo fatal." And why did you not think it? Why did you not examine more attentively and more impartially? Why did you ſuffer the pride and folly of your vain heart to take up with ſuch ſuperficial appearances, and truſt the light ſuggeſtions of your own prejudiced mind againſt the expreſs declaration of the word of God? Had you reflected on his character, as the ſupreme Governor of the world, you would have ſeen the neceſſity of ſuch a day of retribution as we are now referring to. Had you regarded the ſcripture, the divine authority of which you profeſſed to believe, every page might have taught you to expect it. "You did not think of religion?" And of what were you thinking when you forgot or neglected it? Had you too much employment of another kind? Of what kind, I beſeech you? What end could you propoſe by any thing elſe, of equal moment? Nay, with all your engagements, conſcience will tell you that there have been ſeaſons when, for want of thought, time and life have been a burden to you: yet you guarded againſt thought as againſt an enemy, and caſt up, as it were, an intrenchment of inconſideration around you on every ſide, as if it had been to defend you from the moſt dangerous invaſion. God knew you were thoughtleſs; and therefore he ſent you *line upon line, and precept upon precept*, in ſuch plain language, that it needed no genius or ſtudy to underſtand it. He tried you too with afflictions as well as with mercies, to awaken you out of your fatal lethargy; and yet, when awakened, you would lie down again upon the bed of ſloth. And now, pleaſing as your dreams might be, *you muſt lie down in ſorrow*. Reflection has at laſt overtaken you, and muſt be heard as a tormenter, ſince it might not be heard as a friend.

10. But ſome may, perhaps, imagine that one important apology is yet unheard, and that there may be room to ſay, "You were, by the neceſſity of your nature, impelled to thoſe things which are now charged upon you as crimes; whereas it was not in your power to have

avoided them, in the circumſtances in which you were placed." If this will do any thing, it indeed promiſes to do much; ſo much, that it will amount to nothing. If I were diſpoſed to anſwer you upon the folly and madneſs of your own principles, I might ſay, that the ſame conſideration which proves it was neceſſary for you to offend, proves alſo that it is neceſſary for God to puniſh you; and that indeed he cannot but do it: and I might further ſay, with Biſhop Butler, "That the ſame principles which deſtroy the injuſtice of ſins, deſtroy the injuſtice of puniſhments too." But, if you cannot admit this, if you ſhould ſtill reply, in ſpite of principle, that it muſt be unjuſt to puniſh you for an action utterly and abſolutely unavoidable; I really think that you would anſwer right. But in that anſwer you will contradict your own ſcheme, as I obſerved above: and I leave your conſcience to judge what ſort of a ſcheme that muſt be, which would make all kind of puniſhment unjuſt; for the argument will on the whole be the ſame, whether with regard to human puniſhment, or divine. It is a ſcheme full of confuſion and horror. You would not, I am ſure, take it from a ſervant who had robbed you, and then fired your houſe; you would never inwardly believe, that he could not have helped it, or think that he had fairly excuſed himſelf by ſuch a plea. And, I am perſuaded, you would be ſo far from preſuming to offer it to God at the great day, that you would not venture to turn it into a prayer even now. Imagine you ſaw a malefactor dying with ſuch words as theſe: "O God, it is true I did indeed rob and murder my fellow-creature; but thou knoweſt that, as my circumſtances were ordered, I could not do otherwiſe; my will was irreſiſtibly determined by the motives which thou didſt ſet before me; and I could as well have ſhaken the foundations of the earth, or darkened the ſun in the firmament, as have reſiſted the impulſe which bore me on." I put it to your conſcience, whether you would not look on ſuch a ſpeech as this with deteſtation, as one enormity added to another. Yet, if the excuſe would have any weight in your mouth, it would have equal weight in his, or would be equally applicable to any the moſt ſhocking occaſion. But, indeed, it is ſo contrary to the moſt plain principles of common reaſon, that I can hardly perſuade myſelf any

one could ſeriouſly and thoroughly believe it; and ſhould imagine my time very ill employed here, if I were to ſet myſelf to combat thoſe pretences to argument, by which the wantonneſs of human wit has attempted to varniſh it over.

11. You ſee, then, on the whole, the vanity of all your pleas, and how eaſily the moſt plauſible of them might be ſilenced by a mortal man like yourſelf; how much more, then, by Him who ſearches all hearts, and can in a moment flaſh in upon the conſcience a moſt powerful and irreſiſtible conviction! What then can you do, while you ſtand convicted in the preſence of God? What ſhould you do but hold your peace under an inward ſenſe of your inexcuſeable guilt, and prepare yourſelf to hear the ſentence which his law pronounces againſt you? You muſt feel the execution of it, if the goſpel does not at length deliver you; and you muſt feel ſomething of the terror of it, before you can be excited to ſeek to that goſpel for deliverance.

The Meditation of a convinced Sinner, giving up his vain Pleas before God.

DEPLORABLE condition to which I am indeed reduced! *I have ſinned*; and *what ſhall I ſay unto thee, O thou Preſerver of men?* What ſhall I dare to ſay? Fool that I was, to amuſe myſelf with ſuch trifling excuſes as theſe, and to imagine they could have any weight in thy tremendous preſence; or that I ſhould be able ſo much as to mention them there! I cannot preſume to do it. I am ſilent and confounded. My hopes, alas! are ſlain, and my ſoul itſelf is ready to die too, ſo far as an immortal ſoul can die; and I am almoſt ready to ſay, O that I could die entirely! I am indeed a criminal in the hand of juſtice, quite diſarmed, and ſtripped of the weapons in which I truſted. Diſſimulation can only add provocation to provocation. I will therefore plainly and freely own it. I have acted as if I *thought God was altogether ſuch an one as myſelf;* but, he hath ſaid, *I will reprove thee; I will ſet thy ſins in order before thine eyes,* will marſhal them in battle ar-

ray. And O, what a terrible kind of hoſt do they appear! and how do they ſurround me beyond all poſſibility of eſcape! O my ſoul, they have, as it were, taken thee priſoner; and they are bearing thee away to the divine tribunal.

Thou muſt appear before it! thou muſt ſee the awful, eternal Judge, who *tries the very reins;* and who needs no other evidence, for he has *himſelf been witneſs* to all thy rebellion. Thou muſt ſee him, O my ſoul, ſitting in judgment upon thee; and when he is *ſtrict to mark iniquity*, how wilt thou *anſwer him for one of a thouſand?* And if thou canſt not anſwer him, in what language will he ſpeak to thee? Lord, as things at preſent ſtand, I can expect no other language than that of condemnation. And what a condemnation is it! Let me reflect upon it! Let me read my ſentence before I hear it finally and irreverſibly paſſed! I know he has recorded it in his word; and I know in the general that the repreſentation is made with a gracious deſign. I know that he would have us alarmed, that we may not be deſtroyed. Speak to me, therefore, O God, while thou ſpeakeſt not for the laſt time, and in circumſtances when thou wilt hear me no more. Speak in the language of effectual terror, ſo that it be not to ſpeak me into final deſpair; and let thy word, however painful in its operation, be *quick and powerful, and ſharper than any two-edged ſword.* Let me not vainly flatter myſelf; let me not be left a wretched prey to thoſe who would *propheſy ſmooth things to me*, till I am ſealed up under thy wrath, and feel thy juſtice piercing my ſoul, and *the poiſon of thine arrows drinking up all my ſpirits.*

Before I enter upon the particular view, I know in the general that *it is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God.* O thou living God, in one ſenſe I am already fallen into thine hand. I am become obnoxious to thy diſpleaſure, juſtly obnoxious to it; and whatever thy ſentence may be, when it *comes forth from thy preſence*, I muſt condemn myſelf and juſtify thee. Thou canſt not treat me with more ſeverity than mine iniquities have deſerved; and how bitter ſoever that *cup of trembling* may be, which thou ſhalt appoint for me, I give judgment againſt myſelf, that I deſerve to *wring out the very dregs of it.*

CHAP. VI.

The Sinner sentenced.

The sinner called upon to hear his sentence, 1, 2. God's law does now in general pronounce a curse, 3. It pronounceth death, 4. and being turned into hell, 5. The judgment-day shall come, 6. The solemnity of that grand process described according to scriptural representations of it, 7, 8; with a particular illustration of the sentence, "*Depart accursed*," &c. 9. The execution will certainly and immediately follow, 10. The sinner warned to prepare for enduring it, 11. The reflection of a sinner struck with the terror of his sentence.

1. HEAR, O sinner, *and I will speak* yet once more, as in the name of God, thine Almighty Judge, who, if thou dost not attend to his servants, will ere long speak unto thee in a more immediate manner, with an energy and terror which thou shalt not be able to resist.

2. Thou hast been convicted as in his presence. Thy pleasha ve been over-ruled, or rather they have been silenced. It appears before God, it appears to thine own conscience, that thou hast nothing more to offer in arrest of judgment; therefore hear thy sentence, and summon up, if thou canst, all the powers of thy soul to bear the execution of it. *It is indeed a very small thing to be judged of man's judgment; but he that now judgeth is the Lord.* Hear, therefore, and tremble, while I tell thee how he will speak to thee; or rather, while I show thee, from express scripture, how he doth even now speak, and what is the authentic and recorded sentence of his word, even of his word who hath said, *Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one tittle of my word shall ever pass away.*

3. The law of God speaks, not to thee alone, O sinner, nor to thee by any particular address; but in a most universal language it speaks to all transgressors, and levels its terrors against all offenders, great or small, without any exception; and this is its language, *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.* This is its voice to the whole world; and this it speaks to thee. Its awful contents are thy personal concern, O reader, and thy conscience knows it. Far from *continuing in all things that are written therein to do*

them, thou canſt not but be ſenſible, that *innumerable evils have compaſſed thee about.* It is then manifeſt, *thou art the man* whom it condemns; thou art even now *curſed with a curſe*, as God emphatically ſpeaks, *with the curſe* of the Moſt High God; yea, *all the curſes which are written in the book of the law are pointed againſt thee.* God may righteouſly execute any of them upon thee in a moment; and though thou at preſent feeleſt none of them, yet, if infinite mercy doth not prevent, it is but a little while, and they will *come into thy bowels like water*, till thou art burſt aſunder with them, and ſhall penetrate *like oil into thy bones.*

4. Thus ſaith the Lord, *The ſoul that ſinneth ſhall die.* But thou haſt ſinned, and therefore thou art under a ſentence of death: and O, unhappy creature, of what a death! what will the end of theſe things be? That the agonies of diſſolving nature ſhall ſeize thee; that thy ſoul ſhall be torn away from thy languiſhing body, and thou *return to the duſt from whence thou waſt taken!* This is indeed one awful effect of ſin. In theſe affecting characters has God, through all nations and in all ages of men, written the awful regiſter and memorial of his holy abhorrence of it, and righteous diſpleaſure againſt it. But, alas! all this ſolemn pomp and horror of dying is but the opening of the dreadful ſcene. It is but a rough kind of ſtroke by which the fetters are knocked off, when the criminal is led out to torture and execution.

5. Thus ſaith the Lord, *The wicked ſhall be turned into hell, even all the nations that forget God.* Though there be whole nations of them, their multitudes and their power ſhall be no defence to them. They ſhall be driven into hell together; into that flaming priſon, which divine vengeance hath prepared; into Tophet, which is ordained of old, even for royal ſinners as well as for others; ſo little can any human diſtinction protect. *He hath made it deep and large; the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord, like a ſtream of brimſtone, ſhall kindle it;* and the flaming torrent ſhall flow in upon it ſo faſt, that it ſhall be turned into a ſea of liquid fire; or, as the ſcripture alſo expreſſes it, *a lake burning with fire and brimſtone forever and ever.* This is the ſecond death, and the death to which thou, O ſinner, by the word of God art doomed.

6. And shall this sentence stand upon record in vain? Shall the law speak it, and the gospel speak it? And shall it never be pronounced more audibly? And will God never require and execute the punishment? He will, O sinner, require it, and he will execute it, though he may seem for a while to delay. For well dost thou know, that *he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the whole world in righteousness, by that Man whom he hath ordained, of which he hath given assurance in having raised him from the dead.* And when God judgeth the world, O reader, whoever thou art, he will judge thee: while I remind thee of it, I would also remember that he will judge me: and *knowing the terror of the Lord*, that I may *deliver my own soul*, I would, with all plainness and sincerity, labour to deliver thine.

7. I therefore repeat the solemn warning:—Thou, O sinner, shalt *stand before the judgment seat of Christ.* Thou shalt see that pompous appearance, the description of which is grown so familiar to thee, that the repetition of it makes no impression on thy mind; but surely, stupid as thou now art, the shrill trumpet of the archangel shall shake thy very soul; and if nothing else can awaken and alarm thee, the convulsions and flames of a dissolving world shall do it.

8. Dost thou really think that the intent of Christ's final appearance is only to recover his people from the grave, and to raise them to glory and happiness? Whatever assurance thou hast *that there shall be a resurrection of the just*, thou hast the same *that there shall also be a resurrection of the unjust;* that he shall separate the rising dead one from another, *as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats*, with equal certainty, and with infinitely greater ease. Or can you imagine that he will only make an example of some flagrant and notorious sinners, when it is said, that *all the dead, both small and great, shall stand before God;* and that even he who knew not his master's will, and consequently seems of all others to have had the fairest excuse for his omission to obey it, yet even he, for that very omission, *shall be beaten*, though with fewer *stripes!* Or can you think that a sentence to be delivered with so much pomp and majesty, a sentence by which the righteous judgment of God is to be revealed, and to have its most conspicuous

and final triumph, will be inconſiderable, or the puniſhment to which it ſhall conſign the ſinner be ſlight or tolerable? There would have been little reaſon to apprehend, that if we had been left barely to our own conjectures, what that ſentence ſhould be; but this is far from being the caſe. Our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, in his infinite condeſcenſion and compaſſion, has been pleaſed to give us a copy of the ſentence, and no doubt a moſt exact copy; and the words which contain it are worthy of being inſcribed on every heart ——The King, amidſt all the ſplendour and dignity in which he ſhall then appear, *ſhall ſay unto thoſe on his right hand, Come, ye bleſſed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.——Where the word of a king is, there is power;* and theſe words have a power which may juſtly animate the heart of the humble Chriſtian under the moſt overwhelming ſorrow, and may fill him with *joy unſpeakable and full of glory.* To be pronounced the bleſſed of the Lord! to be called to a kingdom! to the immediate, the everlaſting inheritance of it! And of ſuch a kingdom! ſo well prepared, ſo glorious, ſo complete, ſo exquiſitely fitted for the delight and entertainment of ſuch creatures, ſo formed and ſo renewed, that it ſhall appear worthy the eternal counſels of God to have contrived it, worthy his eternal love to have prepared it, and to have delighted himſelf with the views of beſtowing it upon his people! Behold, a bleſſed hope indeed! *a lively, glorious hope,* to which we are *begotten again by the reſurrection of Chriſt from the dead,* and formed by the ſanctifying influence of the Spirit of God upon our minds! But it is a hope from which thou, O ſinner, art at preſent excluded: and will it not be grievous to reflect, "Theſe gracious words ſhall Chriſt ſpeak to ſome, to multitudes, but not to me? On me there is no bleſſedneſs pronounced; for me there is no kingdom prepared." But is that all? Alas, ſinner! Chriſt hath given thee a dreadful counterpart to this; he hath told us what he will ſay to thee, if thou continueſt as thou art; to thee, and to all the nations of the impenitent, unbelieving world, be they ever ſo numerous, be the rank of particular criminals ever ſo great. He ſhall ſay to the kings of the earth, who

have been rebels againſt him, to *the great and rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, as well as to every bondman, and every freeman* of inferior rank, DEPART FROM ME, YE CURSED, INTO EVERLASTING FIRE, PREPARED FOR THE DEVIL AND HIS ANGELS. O, pauſe upon theſe weighty words, that thou mayeſt enter into ſomething of the importance of them!

9. He will ſay, *Depart;* you ſhall be driven from his preſence with diſgrace and infamy; from Him, the ſource of life and bleſſedneſs, in a nearneſs to whom all the inhabitants of heaven continually rejoice; you ſhall depart *accurſed*: you have broken God's law, and its curſe falls upon you, and you are and ſhall be under that curſe, that abiding curſe: from that day forward you ſhall be regarded by God, and all his creatures, as an accurſed and abominable thing, as the moſt deteſtable and the moſt miſerable part of the creation. You ſhall go into *fire;* and O conſider into what fire! Is it merely into one fierce blaze, which ſhall conſume you in a moment, though with exquiſite pain? That were terrible: but O, ſuch terrors are not to be named with theſe: thine, ſinner, is *everlaſting fire;* it is that which our Lord hath in ſuch awful terms deſcribed as prevailing there, *Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched;* and then ſays it a ſecond time, *Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched;* and again, in wonderful compaſſion, a third time, *Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.* Nor was it originally prepared, or principally intended for you; it was *prepared for the devil and his angels;* for thoſe firſt grand rebels who were, immediately upon their fall, doomed to it; and ſince you have taken part with them in their apoſtaſy, you muſt ſink with them in that flaming ruin; and ſink ſo much the deeper, as you have deſpiſed a Saviour who was never offered to them. Theſe muſt be your companions, and your tormentors, with whom you muſt dwell forever. And is it I that ſay this? Or, ſay not the law and the goſpel the ſame? Does not the Lord Jeſus Chriſt expreſsly ſay it, *who is the faithful and true Witneſs;* even he who himſelf is to pronounce the ſentence?

10. And when it is thus pronounced, and pronounced by him, ſhall it not alſo be executed? Who could imag-

ine the contrary? Who could imagine there ſhould be all this pompous declaration, to fill the mind with only vain terror, and that this ſentence ſhould vaniſh into ſmoke? You may eaſily apprehend that this would be a greater reproach to the divine adminiſtration, than if ſentence were never to be paſſed; and, therefore, we might eaſily have inferred the execution of it from the proceſs of the preceding judgment. But leſt the treacherous heart of a ſinner ſhould deceive him with ſo vain a hope, the aſſurance of that execution is immediately added in very memorable terms: it ſhall be done, it ſhall immediately be done. Then, on that very day, while the ſound of it is yet in their ears, *the wicked ſhall go away into everlaſting puniſhment;* and thou, O reader, whoever thou art, being found in their number, ſhalt go away with them; ſhalt be driven on among all theſe wretched multitudes, and plunged with them into eternal ruin. The wide gates of hell ſhall be open to receive thee; they ſhall be ſhut upon thee forever to incloſe thee, and be faſt barred by the almighty hand of divine juſtice, to prevent all hope, all poſſibility of eſcape forever.

11. And now prepare thyſelf *to meet the Lord thy God;* ſummon up all the reſolution of thy mind to endure ſuch a ſentence, ſuch an execution as this; for *he will not meet thee as a man*, whoſe heart will ſometimes fail him, when about to exert a needful act of ſeverity, ſo that compaſſion may prevail againſt reaſon and juſtice. No, he will meet thee as a God, whoſe ſchemes and purpoſes are all immoveable as his throne. I therefore teſtify to thee in his name this day, that, if God be true, he will thus ſpeak; and that if he be able, he will thus act. And on ſuppoſition of thy continuance in thine impenitency and unbelief, thou art brought into this miſerable caſe, that if God be not either falſe or weak, thou art undone, eternally undone.

Reflection of a Sinner, ſtruck with the Terror of his Sentence.

WRETCH that I am! what ſhall I do? or whither ſhall I flee? *I am weighed in the balance, and am found wanting.* This is, indeed, my doom, the doom I am to

expect from the mouth of Christ himself, from the mouth of him that died for the salvation and redemption of men. Dreadful sentence! and so much more dreadful when considered in that view! To what shall I look to save me from it! To whom shall I call! Shall I *say to the rocks, fall on me, and to the hills, cover me?* What should I gain by that? Were I indeed overwhelmed with rocks and mountains, they could not conceal me from the notice of his eye; and his hand could reach me with as much ease there as any where else.

Wretch indeed that I am! O that I had never been born! O that I had never known the dignity and prerogative of the rational nature! Fatal prerogative, indeed, that renders me obnoxious to condemnation and wrath! O that I had never been instructed in the will of God at all, rather than that, being thus instructed, I should have disregarded and transgressed it! Would to God I had been allied to the meanest of the human race, to them that come nearest to the state of the brutes, rather than that I should have had my lot in cultivated life, amidst so many of the improvements of reason, and (dreadful reflection!) amidst so many of the advantages of religion too! and thus to have perverted all to my own destruction! O that God would take away this rational soul! But, alas! it will live forever; will live to feel the agonies of eternal death! Why have I seen the beauties and glories of a world like this, to exchange it for a flaming prison! Why have I tasted so many of my Creator's bounties, to wring out at last the dregs of his wrath! Why have I known the delights of social life and friendly converse, to exchange them for the horrid company of devils and damned spirits in Tophet! O, *who can dwell with them in devouring flames? Who can lie down with them in everlasting, everlasting, everlasting burnings!*

But whom have I to blame in all this but myself? What have I to accuse but my own stupid, incorrigible folly? On what is all this terrible ruin to be charged, but on this one fatal, cursed cause, that having broken God's law, I rejected his gospel too?

Yet stay, O my soul, in the midst of all these doleful, foreboding complaints. Can I say that I have finally rejected the gospel? Am I not to this day under the sound of

it? The ſentence is not yet gone forth againſt me in ſo determinate a manner as to be utterly irreverſible. Through all this gloomy proſpect, one ray of hope breaks in, and it is poſſible I may yet be delivered.

Reviving thought! Rejoice in it, O my ſoul, [illegible] it be with trembling; and turn immediately to [illegible], who, though provoked by ten thouſand offences, has [illegible] yet *ſworn in his wrath that thou ſhalt never* be permitted to hold farther intercourſe with him, or to *enter into his reſt.*

I do then, O bleſſed Lord, proſtrate myſelf in the duſt before thee. I own I am a condemned and miſerable creature: but my language is that of the humble publican, *God be merciful to me, a ſinner!* Some general and confuſed apprehenſions I have of a way by which I may poſſibly eſcape. O God, whatever that way is, ſhow it me, I beſeech thee! Point it out ſo plainly, that I may not be able to miſtake it! And O, reconcile my heart to it, be it ever ſo humbling, be it ever ſo painful.

Surely, Lord, I have much to learn; but be thou my teacher! Stay for a little thine uplifted hand; and, in thine infinite compaſſion, delay the ſtroke, till I inquire a little farther how I may finally avoid it!

CHAP. VII.

The helpleſs State of the Sinner under Condemnation.

The ſinner urged to conſider how he can be ſaved from this impending ruin, 1. 2. (1) Not by any thing he can offer, 3. (2) Nor by any thing he can endure, 4. (3) Nor by any thing he can do in the courſe of future duty, 5. (4) Nor by any alliance with fellow-ſinners on earth, or in hell, 6, 8. (5) Nor by any interpoſition or interceſſion of angels or ſaints in his favour, 9. Hint of the only method, to be afterwards more largely explained, *ib.* The lamentation of a ſinner in this miſerable condition.

1. SINNER, thou haſt heard the ſentence of God, as it ſtands upon record in his ſacred and immutable word. And wilt thou lie down under it in everlaſting deſpair? Wilt thou make no attempt to be delivered from it, when it ſpeaks nothing leſs than eternal death to thy

foul? If a criminal condemned by human laws has but the leaſt ſhadow of hope that he may poſſibly eſcape, he is all attention to it. If there be a friend who he thinks can help him, with what ſtrong importunity does he entreat the interpoſition of that friend? And even while he is before the judge, how difficult is it often to force him away from the bar, while the cry of *mercy, mercy, mercy* may be heard, though it be never ſo unſeaſonable? A mere poſſibility that it may make ſome impreſſion makes him eager in it, and unwilling to be ſilenced and removed.

2. Wilt thou not then, O ſinner, ere yet execution is done, that execution which may, perhaps, be done this very day, wilt thou not caſt about in thy thoughts what meaſures may be taken for thy deliverance? Yet what meaſures can be taken? Conſider attentively; for it is an affair of moment. Thy wiſdom, thy power, thy eloquence, or thine intereſt can never be exerted on a greater occaſion. If thou canſt help thyſelf, do. If thou haſt any ſecret ſource of relief, go not out of thyſelf for other aſſiſtance. If thou haſt any ſacrifice to offer, if thou haſt any ſtrength to exert; yea, if thou haſt any allies on earth, or in the inviſible world, who can defend and deliver thee, take thine own way, ſo that thou mayeſt but be delivered at all, and we may not ſee thy ruin. But ſay, O ſinner, in the preſence of God, what ſacrifice thou wilt preſent, what ſtrength thou wilt exert, what allies thou wilt have recourſe to, on ſo urgent, ſo hopeleſs an occaſion; for hopeleſs I muſt indeed pronounce it, if ſuch methods are taken.

3. The juſtice of God is injured. Haſt thou any atonement to make to it? If thou waſt brought to an inquiry and propoſal, like that of the awakened ſinner, *Wherewith ſhall I come before the Lord, and bow myſelf before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleaſed with thouſands of rams, or with ten thouſands of rivers of oil?* Alas! wert thou as great a prince as Solomon himſelf, and couldſt thou indeed purchaſe ſuch ſacrifices as theſe, there would be no room to mention them. *Lebanon would not be ſufficient to burn, nor all the beaſts thereof for a burnt offering.* Even under that diſpenſation, which admitted and required ſacrifices in ſome caſes, the blood of bulls and goats, though it exempted the offender from farther temporal puniſhment, could not

take away ſin, nor prevail by any means to purge the conſcience in the ſight of God. And that ſoul that had done aught preſumptuouſly, was not allowed to bring any ſin-offering, or treſpaſs-offering at all, but was condemned to *die without mercy*. Now God and thine own conſcience know that thine offences have not been merely the errors of ignorance and inadvertency; but that thou haſt ſinned with a high hand, in repeated, aggravated inſtances, as thou haſt acknowledged already. Shouldſt thou add, with the wretched ſinner deſcribed above, *Shall I give my firſt-born for my tranſgreſſion, the fruit of my body for the ſin of my ſoul?* what could the blood of a beloved child do in ſuch a caſe, but dye thy crimes ſo much the deeper, and add a yet unknown horror to them? Thou haſt offended a Being of infinite majeſty; and if that offence is to be expiated by blood, it muſt be by another kind of blood than that which flows in the veins of thy children, or in thine own.

4. Wilt thou then ſuffer thyſelf, till thou haſt made full ſatisfaction? But how ſhall that ſatisfaction be made? Shall it be by any calamities to be endured in this mortal, momentary life? Is the juſtice of God then eſteemed ſo little a thing, that the ſorrows of a few days ſhould ſuffice to anſwer its demands? Or doſt thou think of future ſufferings in the inviſible world? If thou doſt, that is not deliverance: and with regard to that, I may venture to ſay, when thou haſt made full ſatisfaction, thou wilt be releaſed; when thou haſt paid the utmoſt farthing of that debt, thy priſon-doors ſhall be opened. In the mean time, thou muſt *make thy bed in hell;* and O, unhappy man! wilt thou lie down there with a ſecret hope, that the moment will come when the rigour of divine juſtice will not be able to inflict any thing more than thou haſt endured, and when thou mayeſt claim thy diſcharge as a matter of right? It would indeed be well for thee, if thou couldſt carry down with thee ſuch a hope, falſe and flattering as it is; but alas! thou wilt ſee things in ſo juſt a light, that to have no comfort but this will be eternal deſpair. That one word of thy ſentence, *everlaſting fire;* that one declaration, *the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched;* will be ſufficient to ſtrike ſuch a thought into black confuſion, and to overwhelm thee with hopeleſs agony and horror.

5. Or do you think that your future reformation and diligence in duty for the time to come, will procure your discharge from this sentence? Take heed, sinner, what kind of obedience thou thinkest of offering to an holy God. That must be spotless and complete, which his infinite sanctity can approve and accept, if he consider thee in thyself alone; there must be no inconstancy, no forgetfulness, no mixture of sin attending it. And wilt thou, enfeebled as thou art by so much original corruption, and so many sinful habits contracted by innumerable actual transgressions, undertake to render such an obedience, and that for all the remainder of thy life? In vain wouldst thou attempt it even for one day. New guilt would immediately plunge thee into new ruin: but if it did not; if from this moment to the very end of thy life, all were as complete obedience as the law of God required from Adam in paradise, would that be sufficient to cancel past guilt? Would it discharge an old debt, that thou hadst not contracted a new one? Offer this to thy neighbour, and see if he will accept it for payment; and if he will not, wilt thou presume to offer it to thy God?

6. But I will not multiply words on so plain a subject. While I speak thus, time is passing away, death presses on, and judgment is approaching. And what can save thee from these awful scenes, or what can protect thee in them? Can the world save thee? that vain, delusive idol of thy wishes and pursuits, to which thou art sacrificing thine eternal hopes? Well dost thou know that it will utterly forsake thee when thou needest it most; and that not one of its enjoyments can be carried along with thee into the invisible state; no, not so much as a trifle to remember it by, if thou couldst desire to remember so inconstant and so treacherous a friend as the world has been.

7. And when you are dead, or when you are dying, can your sinful companions save you? Is there any one of them, if he were ever so desirous of doing it, that *can give unto God a ransom for you*, to deliver you from going down to the grave, or from going down to hell? Alas! you will probably be so sensible of this, that when you lie on the border of the grave, you will be unwilling to see or to converse with those that were once your favourite companions. They will afflict you rather than relieve you, even then;

how much less can they relieve you before the bar of God, when they are overwhelmed with their own condemnation!

8. As for the powers of darkness, you are sure they will be far from any ability or inclination to help you. Satan has been watching and labouring for your destruction, and he will triumph in it. But if there could be any thing of an amicable confederacy between you, what would that be but an association in ruin? For the day of judgment of ungodly men will also be the judgment of these rebellious spirits; and the fire into which thou, O sinner, must depart, is that which was *prepared for the devil and his angels.*

9. Will the celestial spirits then save thee? Will they interpose their power or their prayers in thy favour? An interposition of power, when sentence is gone forth against thee, were an act of rebellion against Heaven, which those holy and excellent creatures would abhor. And when the final pleasure of the Judge is known, instead of interceding, in vain, for the wretched criminal, they would rather, with ardent zeal for the glory of their Lord, and cordial acquiescence in his wise and just determination, prepare to execute it. Yea, difficult as it may now be to conceive, it is a certain truth, that the servants of Christ, who most tenderly love you, and most affectionately seek your salvation, not excepting those who are allied to you in the nearest bonds of nature, or of friendship, even they shall put their *Amen* to it. Now indeed their bowels yearn over you, and their eye poureth out tears on your account; now they expostulate with you, and plead with God for you, if by any means, while yet there is hope, you may be *plucked as a fire-brand out of the burning;* but, alas! their remonstrances you will not regard; and as for their prayers, what should they ask for you? What but this, that you may see yourselves to be undone; and that, utterly despairing of any help from yourselves, or from any created power, you may lie before God in humility and brokenness of heart; that, submitting yourselves to his righteous judgment, and in an utter renunciation of all self-dependence, and of all creature-dependence, you may lift up an humble look towards him, as almost from the depths of hell, if peradventure he may have compassion upon you, and may himself direct you to that only method of rescue, which, while things continue as they are, neither earth, nor hell, nor heaven can afford you.

Lamentation of a Sinner in this miserable Condition.

O DOLEFUL, uncomfortable, helpless state! O wretch that I am, to have reduced myself to it! Poor, empty, miserable, abandoned creature! Where is my pride, and the haughtiness of my heart? Where are my idol deities, *whom I have loved and served, after whom I have walked, and whom I have sought*, whilst I have been multiplying my transgressions against the Majesty of heaven? Is there no heart to have compassion upon me; is there no hand to save me? *Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O my friends; for the hand of God hath touched me*, hath seized me! I feel it pressing me hard; and what shall I do? Perhaps they have pity upon me: but, alas, how feeble a compassion! Only if there be any where in the whole compass of nature any help, tell me where it may be found! O point it out; direct me towards it; or rather, confounded and astonished as my mind is, take me by the hand and lead me to it.

O ye ministers of the Lord, whose office it is to guide and comfort distressed souls, take pity upon me! I fear I am a pattern of many other helpless creatures, who have the like need of your assistance. Lay aside your other cares to care for my soul; to care for this precious soul of mine, which lies, as it were, bleeding to death, if that expression may be used, while you, perhaps, hardly afford me a look; or glancing an eye upon me, *pass over to the other side.* Yet, alas! in a case like mine, what can your interposition avail, if it be alone? *If the Lord do not help me, how can ye help me?*

O *God of the spirits of all flesh*, I lift up mine eyes unto thee, and cry unto thee, as *out of the belly of hell.* I cry unto thee at least from the borders of it. Yet while I lie before thee in this infinite distress, I know that thine almighty power and boundless grace can still find out a way for my recovery.

Thou art he whom I have most of all injured and affronted; and yet from thee alone must I now seek redress. *Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done evil in thy sight: so that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest*, though thou shouldst this moment adjudge

me to etenal miſery. And yet I find ſomething that ſecretly draws me to thee, as if I might find refcue there, where I have deſerved the moſt aggravated deſtruction. Bleſſed God, *I have deſtroyed myſelf; but in thee is my help*, if there can be help at all.

I know in the general, that *thy ways are not as our ways, nor thy thoughts as our thoughts*; but are as *high above them, as the heavens are above the earth. Have mercy*, therefore, *upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindneſs, according to the multitude of thy tender mercies!* O point out the path to the city of refuge! O lead me thyſelf *in the way everlaſting!* I know in the general, that thy goſpel is the only remedy! O teach thy ſervants to adminiſter it! O prepare mine heart to receive it! and ſuffer not, as in many inſtances, that malignity which has ſpread itſelf through all my nature, to turn that noble medicine into poiſon.

CHAP. VIII.

News of Salvation by Chriſt, brought to the convinced and condemned Sinner.

The awful things which have hitherto been said, intended not to grieve but to help, 1. After some reflection on the pleasure with which a minister of the gospel may deliver the message with which he is charged, 2, and some reasons for the repetition of what is in speculation so generally known, 3, the author proceeds briefly to declare the substance of these glad tidings: *viz.* That God having, in his infinite compassion, sent his Son to die for sinners, is now reconcileable through him, 4—6: so that the most heinous transgressions shall be entirely pardoned to believers, and they made completely and eternally happy, 7, 8. The sinner's reflection on this good news.

1. My dear reader, it is the great deſign of the goſpel, and, wherever it is cordially received, it is the glorious effect of it, to fill the heart with ſentiments of love; to teach us to abhor all unneceſſary rigour and ſeverity; and to delight, not in the grief, but in the happineſs of our fellow-creatures. I can hardly apprehend how he can be a Chriſtian, who takes a pleaſure in the diſtreſs which appears even in a brute, much leſs in that of a hu-

man mind; and, especially, in such distress as the thoughts I have been proposing must give, if there be any due attention to their weight and energy. I have often felt a tender regret while I have been representing these things; and I could have wished from mine heart that it had not been necessary to have placed them in so severe and so painful a light.—But now I am addressing myself to a part of my work which I undertake with unutterable pleasure; and to that which indeed I had in view, in all those awful things which I have already been laying before you. I have been showing you, that if you hitherto have lived in a state of impenitence and sin, you are condemned by God's righteous judgment, and have in yourself no spring of hope, and no possibility of deliverance. But I mean not to leave you under this sad apprehension, to lie down and die in despair, complaining of that cruel zeal which has *tormented you before the time.*

2. Arise, O thou dejected soul, that art prostrate in the dust before God, and trembling under the terrors of his righteous sentence: for I am commissioned to tell thee, that though *thou hast destroyed thyself, in God is thine help.* I bring thee *good tidings of great joy*, which delight mine own heart while I proclaim them, and will, I hope, reach and revive thine; even the tidings of salvation by the blood and righteousness of the Redeemer. And I give it thee, for thy greater security, in the words of a gracious and forgiving God, that *he is in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, and not imputing to them their trespasses.*

3. This is the best news that ever was heard, the most important message which God ever sent to his creatures; and though I doubt not at all, but living as you have done, in a Christian country, you have heard it often, perhaps a thousand and a thousand times, I will with all simplicity and plainness repeat it to you again, and repeat it as if you had never heard it before. If thou, O sinner, shouldst now, for the first time, feel it, then will it be as a new gospel unto thee, though so familiar to thine ear; nor shall it be grievous for me to speak what is so common, since to you it is safe and necessary. They who are most deeply and intimately acquainted with it, instead of being cloyed and satiated, will hear it with distinguished pleasure; and as for those who have hitherto slighted it, I am sure they had

need to hear it again. Nor is it absolutely impossible that some one soul at least may read these lines, who hath never been clearly and fully instructed in this important doctrine, though his everlasting all depends on knowing and receiving it. I will therefore take care, that such a one shall not have it to plead at the bar of God, that though he lived in a Christian country, he was never plainly and faithfully taught the doctrine of salvation by Jesus Christ, *the way, the truth, and the life, by whom alone we come unto the Father.*

4. I do therefore testify unto you this day, that the holy and gracious Majesty of heaven and earth, foreseeing the fatal apostasy into which the whole human race would fall, did not determine to deal in a way of strict and rigorous severity with us, so as to consign us over to universal ruin and inevitable damnation; but, on the contrary, he determined to enter into a treaty of peace and reconciliation, and to publish to all to whom the gospel should reach, the express offers of life and glory, in a certain method, which his infinite wisdom judged suitable to the purity of his nature, and the honour of his government. This method was indeed a most astonishing one, which, familiar as it is to our thoughts and our tongues, I cannot recollect and mention without great amazement. He determined to send his own Son into the world, *the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person*, partaker of his own divine perfections and honours, to be not merely a teacher of righteousness and a messenger of grace, but also a sacrifice for the sins of men; and would consent to his saving them on no other condition but this, that he should not only labour, but die in the cause.

5. Accordingly, at such a period of time as infinite wisdom saw most convenient, the Lord Jesus Christ appeared in human flesh; and after he had gone through incessant and long continued fatigues, and borne all the preceding injuries which the ingratitude and malice of men could inflict, he voluntarily *submitted himself to death, even the death of the cross*; and having been *delivered for our offences, was raised again for our justification.* After his resurrection, he continued long enough on earth to give his followers convincing evidences of it, and then *ascended into heaven in their sight*, and sent down his Spirit from thence on his apostles,

to enable them, in the moſt perſuaſive and authoritative manner, to *preach the goſpel;* and he has given it in charge to them, and to thoſe who, in every age, ſucceed them in this part of their office, that it ſhould be publiſhed *to every creature;* that all who believe in it may be ſaved, by virtue of its abiding energy, and the immutable power and grace of its Divine Author, who is *the ſame yeſterday, to-day, and forever.*

6. This goſpel I do therefore now preach, and proclaim unto thee, O reader, with the ſincereſt deſire, that, through divine grace, it may this very day be *ſalvation to thy ſoul.* Know therefore and conſider it, whoſoever thou art, that as ſurely as theſe words are now before thine eyes, ſo ſure it is that the incarnate Son of God *was made a ſpectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men:* his back torn with ſcourges, his head with thorns, his limbs ſtretched out as on a rack, and nailed to the accurſed tree; and in this miſerable condition he was hung up by his hands and his feet, as an object of public infamy and contempt. Thus did he die, in the midſt of all the taunts and inſults of his cruel enemies, who thirſted for his blood; and, which was the ſaddeſt circumſtance of all, in the midſt of thoſe agonies with which he cloſed the moſt innocent, perfect, and uſeful life that ever was ſpent upon earth, he had not thoſe ſupports of the divine preſence which ſinful men have often experienced when they have been ſuffering for the teſtimony of their conſcience. They have often burſt out into tranſports of joy, and ſongs of praiſe, while their executioners have been glutting their helliſh malice, and more than ſavage barbarity, by making their torments artifically grievous; but the crucified Jeſus cried out, in the diſtreſs of his ſpotleſs and holy ſoul, *My God, my God, why haſt thou forſaken me?*

7. Look upon our dear Redeemer! look up to this mournful, dreadful, yet in one view, delightful ſpectacle, and then aſk thine own heart, Doſt thou believe that Jeſus ſuffered and died thus? And why did he ſuffer and die? Let me anſwer in God's own words, *He was wounded for our tranſgreſſions, he was bruiſed for our iniquities, and the chaſtiſement of our peace was upon him, that by his ſtripes we might be healed; it pleaſed the Lord to bruiſe him and to put him to grief, when he made his ſoul an offering for ſin!* for,

the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all. So that I may addreſs you in the words of the apoſtle, *Be it known unto you, therefore, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveneſs of ſins:* as it was his command, juſt after he roſe from the dead, that *repentance and remiſſion of ſins ſhould be preached in his name unto all nations, beginning at Jeruſalem,* the very place where his blood had ſo lately been ſhed in ſo cruel a manner. I do therefore teſtify unto you, in the words of another inſpired writer, that *Chriſt was made ſin,* that is, a ſin-offering, *for us, though he knew no ſin, that we might be made the righteouſneſs of God in him;* that is, that through the righteouſneſs he has fulfilled, and the atonement he has made, we might be accepted by God as righteous and be not only pardoned, but received into his favour. *To you is the word of ſalvation ſent;* and to you, O reader, are the bleſſings of it even now offered by God, ſincerely offered; ſo that after all I have ſaid under the former heads, it is not your having broken the law of God that ſhall prove your ruin, if you do not alſo reject his goſpel. It is not all thoſe legions of ſins which riſe up in battle array againſt you, that ſhall be able to deſtroy you, if unbelief do not lead them on, and final impenitence do not bring up the rear. I know that guilt is a timorous thing: I will therefore ſpeak in the words of God himſelf; nor can any be more comfortable: *He that believeth on the Son hath everlaſting life; and he ſhall never come into condemnation: there is therefore now no condemnation,* no kind or degree of it to them, to any one of them, *who are in Chriſt Jeſus, who walk not after the fleſh, but after the Spirit.* You have indeed been a very great ſinner, and your offences have truly been attended with the moſt heinous aggravations; nevertheleſs you may rejoice in the aſſurance, that *where ſin hath abounded, there ſhall grace much more abound;* that *where ſin hath reigned unto death,* where it has had its moſt unlimited ſway, and moſt unreſiſted triumph, there ſhall *righteouſneſs reign to eternal life, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.* That righteouſneſs to which, on believing on him, thou wilt be entitled, ſhall not only break thoſe chains by which ſin is, as it were, dragging thee at its chariot wheels with a furious pace to eternal ruin, but it ſhall clothe thee with robes of ſalvation, ſhall fix thee on a throne of glory, where thou ſhalt live and reign forever, among the princes of

heaven, ſhalt reign in immortal beauty and joy, without one remaining fear of divine diſpleaſure upon thee, without any ſingle mark by which it could be known that thou hadſt ever been obnoxious to wrath and a curſe: except it be an anthem of praiſe *to the Lamb that was ſlain, and has waſhed thee from thy ſins in his own blood.*

8. Nor is it neceſſary in order to thy being releaſed from guilt, and entitled to this high and complete felicity, that thou ſhouldſt, before thou wilt venture to apply to Jeſus, bring any good works of thine own to recommend thee to his acceptance. It is indeed true, that if thy faith be ſincere, it will certainly produce them: but I have the authority of the word of God to tell thee, that if thou this day ſincerely believeſt in the name of the Son of God, thou ſhalt this day be taken under his care, and be numbered among thoſe of his ſheep to whom he hath graciouſly declared that *he will give eternal life;* and, *that they ſhall never periſh.* Thou haſt no need therefore to ſay, *Who ſhall go up into heaven? Or, who ſhall deſcend into the deep* for me? *for the word is nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thine heart.* With this joyful meſſage I leave thee; with this *faithful ſaying*, indeed, *worthy of all acceptation;* with this goſpel, O ſinner, which is my life, and which, if thou doſt not reject it, will be thine too.

The Sinner's Reflection on this good News.

O MY ſoul, how aſtoniſhing is the meſſage which thou haſt this day received! I have indeed often heard it before, and it is grown ſo common to me, that the ſurpriſe is not ſenſible. But reflect, O my ſoul, what it is thou haſt heard, and ſay, whether the name of the Saviour, whoſe meſſage it is, may not well be called, *Wonderful Counſellor*, when he diſplays before thee ſuch wonders of love, and propoſes to thee ſuch counſels of peace!

Bleſſed Jeſus, is it indeed thus! Is it not the fiction of the human mind? Surely it is not! What human mind could have invented or conceived it? Is it a plain, certain fact, that thou didſt leave the magnificence and joy of the heavenly world in compaſſion to ſuch a wretch as I? O hadſt

thou, from that height of dignity and felicity, only looked down upon me for a moment, and sent some gracious word to me for my direction and comfort, even by the least of thy servants, justly might I have prostrated myself in grateful admiration, and have kissed the very footsteps of him that published salvation. But didst thou condescend to be thyself the messenger? What grace had that been though thou hadst but once in person made the declaration, and immediately returned back to the throne, from whence divine compassion brought thee down? But this is not all the triumph of thine illustrious grace; it not only brought thee down to earth, but kept thee here in a frail and wretched tabernacle for long successive years; and at length it cost thee thy life, and stretched thee out as a malefactor upon the cross, after thou hadst borne insult and cruelty, which it may justly wound my heart so much as to think of: and thus thou hast atoned injured justice, and *redeemed me to God with thine own blood.*

What shall I say? *Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief.* It seems to put faith to the stretch to admit what it indeed exceeds the utmost stretch of imagination to conceive. Blessed, forever blessed be thy name, O thou Father of mercies, that thou hast contrived the way! Eternal thanks to the Lamb that was slain, and to that kind Providence that sent the word of this salvation to me! O let me not for ten thousand worlds *receive this grace of God in vain!* O impress this gospel upon my soul, till its saving virtue be diffused over every faculty! Let it not only be heard, and acknowledged, and professed, but felt! Make it thy power to my eternal salvation; and raise me to that humble, tender gratitude, to that active, unwearied zeal in thy service, which becomes one *to whom so much is forgiven;* and forgiven upon such terms as these!

I feel a sudden glow in mine heart while these tidings are sounding in mine ears; but, O! let it not be a slight, superficial transport! O let not this which I would fain call my Christian joy, be as that foolish laughter with which I have been so madly enchanted, *like the crackling blaze of thorns under a pot!* O teach me to secure this mighty blessing, this glorious hope, in the method which thou hast appointed! and preserve me from mistaking the joy of nature,

while it catches a glimpse of its rescue from destruction, for that consent of grace, which embraces and insures deliverance.

CHAP. IX.

A more particular Account of the Way by which this Salvation is obtained.

An inquiry into the way of salvation by Christ being supposed, 1. The sinner is in general directed to repentance and faith, 2; and urged to give up all self-dependence, 3; and to seek salvation by free grace, 4. A summary of more particular directions is proposed, 5. (1) That the sinner should apply to Christ, 6. with deep abhorrence of his former sins, 7, and a firm resolution of forsaking them, 8. (2.) That he solemnly commit his soul into the hands of Christ, the great vital act of faith, 9; which is exemplified at large, 10. (3) That he make it in fact the governing care of his future life to obey and imitate Christ, 11. This is the only method of obtaining gospel salvation, 12. The sinner deliberating on the expediency of accepting it.

1. I NOW consider you, my dear reader, as coming to me with the inquiry which the Jews once addressed to our Lord, *What shall we do that we may work the works of God?* What method shall I take to secure that redemption and salvation which I am told Christ has procured for his people? I would answer it as seriously and carefully as possible, as one that knows of what importance it is to you to be rightly informed; and that knows also how strictly he is to answer to God for the sincerity and care with which the reply is made. May I be enabled to *speak as his oracle*, that is, in such a manner, as faithfully to echo back what the sacred oracles teach.

2. And here, that I may be sure to follow the safest guides, and the fairest examples, I must preach salvation to you in the way of *repentance towards God, and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ*; that good old doctrine which the apostles preached, and which no man can pretend to change, but at the peril of his own soul, and of theirs who attend to him.

3. I suppose that you are by this time convinced of your guilt and condemnation, and of your own inability to re-

cover yourself. Let me, nevertheless, urge you to feel that conviction yet more deeply, and to impress it with yet greater weight upon your soul; that you have *undone yourself*, and that *in yourself is not your help found.* Be persuaded, therefore, expressly and solemnly and sincerely to give up all self-dependence, which, if you do not guard against it, will be ready to return secretly before it is observed, and will lead you to attempt building up what you have just been destroying.

4. Be assured, that if ever you are saved, you must ascribe that salvation entirely to the free grace of God. If, guilty and miserable as you are, you are not only accepted but crowned, you must *lay down your crown*, with all humble acknowledgment, before the throne. *No flesh must glory in his presence; but he that glorieth must glory in the Lord: for of him are we in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.* And you must be sensible you are in such a state as having none of these in yourself, to need them in another. You must therefore be sensible that you are ignorant and guilty, polluted and enslaved; or as our Lord expresses it (with regard to some that were under a Christian profession) that, as a sinner, you *are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.*

5. If these views be deeply impressed upon your mind, you will be prepared to receive what I am now to say. Hear, therefore, in a few words, your duty, your remedy, and your safety, which consists in this, "That you must apply to Christ with a deep abhorrence of your former sins, and a firm resolution of forsaking them; forming that resolution in the strength of his grace, and fixing your dependence on him for your acceptance with God, even while you are purposing to do your very best: and when you have actually done the best you ever will do in consequence of that purpose."

6. The first and most important advice that I can give you in the present circumstances, is, "That you look to Christ, and apply yourself to him."—And here *say not in your heart, Who shall ascend into heaven, to bring him down to me?* or, Who shall raise me up thither, to present me before him? The blessed Jesus, *by whom all things consist*, by whom the whole system of them is supported, forgotten as

he is by moſt that bear his name, *is not far from any of us*; nor could he have promiſed to have been *wherever two or three are met together in his name*, but in conſequence of thoſe truly divine perfections by which he is every where preſent. Would you therefore, O ſinner, deſire to be ſaved? Go to the Saviour: Would you deſire to be delivered, look to that great Deliverer; and though you ſhould be ſo overwhelmed with guilt and ſhame and fear and horror, that you ſhould be incapable of ſpeaking to him, fall down in this ſpeechleſs confuſion at his feet, and *behold him as the Lamb of God, that taketh away the ſin of the world.*

7. Behold him, therefore, with an attentive eye, and ſay whether the ſight does not touch and even melt thy very heart? Doſt thou not feel what a fooliſh and what a wretched creature thou haſt been, that, for the ſake of ſuch low and ſordid gratifications and intereſts as thoſe which thou haſt been purſuing, thou ſhouldſt thus *kill the Prince of Life.* Behold the deep wounds which he bore for thee. *Look on him whom thou haſt pierced, and ſurely thou muſt mourn*, unleſs thine heart be hardened into ſtone. Which of thy paſt ſins canſt thou reflect upon, and ſay, "For this it was worth my while thus to have injured my Saviour, and to have expoſed the Son of God to ſuch ſufferings! And what future temptations can ariſe ſo conſiderable, that thou ſhouldſt ſay, *For the ſake of this I will crucify my Lord again?* Sinner; thou muſt repent; thou muſt repent of every ſin, and muſt forſake it: but if thou doſt it to any purpoſe, I well know it muſt be as at the foot of the croſs. Thou muſt ſacrifice every luſt, even the deareſt, though it ſhould be like a right hand, or a right eye; and therefore, that thou mayeſt if poſſible be animated to it, I have led thee to that altar, on which *Chriſt himſelf was ſacrificed for thee, an offering of a ſweet ſmelling ſavour.* Thou muſt *yield up thyſelf to God as one alive from the dead;* and therefore I have ſhowed thee at what a price he purchaſed thee: *for thou waſt not redeemed with corruptible things, as ſilver and gold; but with the precious blood of the Son of God, that Lamb without blemiſh and without ſpot.* And now I would aſk thee, as before the Lord, what does thine own heart ſay to it? Art thou grieved for thy former offences? Art thou willing to forſake thy ſins? Art thou willing to become

the cheerful, thankful servant of him, "who hath purchased thee with his own blood?"

8. I will suppose such a purpose as this rising in thine heart; how determinate it is, and how effectual it may be, I know not; what different views may arise hereafter, nor how soon the present sense may wear off: but this I assuredly know, that thou wilt never see reason to change these views; for however thou mayest alter, the Lord *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever:* and the reasons that now recommend repentance and faith, as fit and necessary, will continue invariable, as long as the perfections of the blessed God are the same, and as long as his Son continues the same.

9. But while you have these views and these purposes, I must remind you, that this is not all that is necessary to your salvation. You must not only purpose, but, as God give opportunity, you must act as those who are convinced of the evil of sin, and of the necessity and excellence of holiness: and that you may be enabled to do so in other instances, you must in the first place, and as the first great work of God (as our Lord himself calls it) *believe in him whom God hath sent.* You must confide in him, "must commit your soul into the hands of Christ, to be saved by him in his own appointed method of salvation." This is the great act of saving faith; and I pray God that you may experimentally know what it means, so as to be able to say with the apostle Paul, in the near view of death itself, *I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him until that day;* that great decisive day, which, if we are Christians, we have always in view. To this I would urge you; and O that I could be so happy as to engage you to it while I am illustrating it in this and the following addresses! Be assured you must not apply yourselves immediately to God, as absolutely or in himself considered, in the neglect of a Mediator. It will neither be acceptable to him, nor safe for you, to rush into his presence without any regard to his own Son, whom he hath appointed to introduce sinners to him; and if you come otherwise, you come as one who is not a sinner; the very manner of presenting the address will be interpreted as a denial of that guilt with which he knows you are chargeable; and therefore he will not admit

you, nor so much as look upon you.—And accordingly, our Lord, knowing how much every man living was concerned in this, says in the most universal terms, *No man cometh unto the Father but by me.*

10. Apply, therefore, to this glorious Redeemer, amiable (as he will appear to every believing eye) in the blood which he shed upon the cross, and in the wounds which he received there. Go to him, O sinner, this day, this moment, with all thy sins about thee. Go, just as thou art; for if thou wilt never apply to him till thou art first righteous and holy, thou wilt never be righteous and holy at all; nor canst be so on this supposition, unless there were some way of being so without him, and then there would be no occasion for applying to him for righteousness and holiness. It were indeed as if it should be said, that a sick man should defer his application to a physician till his health be recovered. Let me, therefore, repeat it without offence, Go to him just as thou art, and say (O that thou mayest this moment be enabled to say it from thy very soul!) "Blessed Jesus, I am surely one of the most sinful, and one of the most miserable creatures that ever fell prostrate before thee; nevertheless, I come, because I have heard that thou didst once say, *Come unto me, all ye that are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.* I come, because I have heard that thou didst graciously say, *Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.* O thou Prince of Peace, O thou King of Glory, I am a condemned, miserable sinner. I have ruined my own soul, and am condemned forever, if thou dost not help me and save me. I have broken thy Father's law and thine, for thou art *one with him.* I have deserved condemnation and wrath; and I am, even at this very moment, under a sentence of everlasting destruction; a destruction which will be aggravated by all the contempt which I have cast upon thee, O thou bleeding Lamb of God; for I cannot, and will not dissemble it before thee, that I have wronged thee, most basely and ungratefully wronged thee, under the character of a Saviour as well as of a Lord; but now I am willing to submit to thee; and I have brought my poor, trembling soul, to lodge it in thine hands, if thou will condescend to receive it, and if thou dost not, it must perish. O Lord, I lie at thy feet; stretch out *thy golden sceptre, that I may live!* Yea, if it *please the King, let the life of my soul*

be given me at my petition! I have no treaſure wherewith to purchaſe it; I have no equivalent to give thee for it; but if that compaſſionate heart of thine can find a pleaſure in ſaving one of the moſt diſtreſſed creatures under heaven, that pleaſure thou mayeſt here find. O Lord, I have fooliſhly attempted to be mine own ſaviour; but it will not do: I am ſenſible the attempt is vain, and therefore I give it over, and look unto thee. On thee, bleſſed Jeſus, who art ſure and ſteadfaſt, do I deſire to fix my anchor: on thee, as the only ſure foundation, would I build my eternal hopes: to thy teaching, O thou unerring Prophet of the Lord, would I ſubmit: be thy doctrines ever ſo myſterious, it is enough for me that thou thyſelf haſt ſaid it: to thine atonement, obedience, and interceſſion, O thou holy and ever acceptable High Prieſt, would I truſt, and to thy government, O thou exalted Sovereign, would I yield a willing, delightful ſubjection. In token of reverence and love, I *kiſs the Son;* I kiſs the ground before his feet: I admit thee, O my Saviour, and welcome thee with unutterable joy, to the throne in my heart: aſcend it, and reign there forever! Subdue mine enemies, O Lord, for they are thine; and make me thy faithful, thy zealous ſervant; faithful to death, and zealous to eternity!"

11. Such as this muſt be the language of your very heart before the Lord. But then remember, that in conſequence hereof, it muſt be the language of your life too. The unmeaning words of the lips would be a vain mockery. The moſt affectionate tranſport of the paſſions, ſhould it be tranſient and ineffectual, would be but like a blaze of ſtraw preſented, inſtead of incenſe, at his altar. With ſuch humility, with ſuch love, with ſuch cordial ſelf-dedication, and ſubmiſſion of ſoul, muſt thou often proſtra e thyſelf in the preſence of Chriſt: and then thou muſt go away, and keep him in thy view; muſt go away, and live unto God through him, *denying ungodlineſs and worldly luſts*, and behaving thyſelf *ſoberly, righteouſly, and godlily, in this vain, enſnaring world.* You muſt make it your care to ſhow your love by obedience; by forming yourſelf, as much as poſſible, according to the temper and manner of Jeſus, in whom you believe. You muſt make it the great point of your ambition (and a nobler view you cannot entertain) to be a living image of Chriſt; that, ſo far as circumſtances will allow,

even thoſe who have heard and read but little of him may, by obſerving you, in ſome meaſure ſee and know what kind of a life that of the bleſſed Jeſus was. And this muſt be your conſtant care, your prevailing character, as long as you live. You muſt follow him whitherſoever he leads you; you muſt follow him with a croſs on your ſhoulder, when he comm..nds you to *take it up*; and ſo muſt be *faithful even unto death, expecting the crown of life.*

12. This, ſo far as I have been able to learn from the word of God, is the way to ſafety and glory; the ſureſt, the only way you can take. It is the way which every faithful miniſter of Chriſt has trod, and is treading; and the way to which, as he tenders the ſalvation of his own ſoul, he muſt direct others. We cannot, we would not alter it in favour of ourſelves, or of our deareſt friends. It is the way in which alone, ſo far as we can judge, it becomes the bleſſed God to ſave his apoſtate creatures. And therefore, reader, I beſeech and entreat you ſeriouſly to conſider it, and let your own conſcience anſwer as in the preſence of God, whether you are willing to acquieſce in it or not. But know, that to reject it, is thine eternal death. For as *there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we can be ſaved*, but this of Jeſus of Nazareth, ſo there is no other method but this, in which Jeſus himſelf will ſave us.

The Sinner deliberating on the Expediency of falling in with this Method of Salvation.

CONSIDER, O my ſoul, what anſwer wilt thou return to ſuch propoſals as theſe! Surely, if I were to ſpeak the firſt dictate of this degenerate heart, it would be,—*This is a hard ſaying, and who can bear it?* To be thus humbled, thus mortified, thus ſubjected! to take ſuch a yoke upon me, and to carry it as long as I live! to give up every darling luſt, though dear to me as a right eye, and ſeemingly neceſſary as a right hand! to ſubmit, not only my life, but my heart, to the command and diſcipline of another! to have a maſter there, and ſuch a maſter as will control many of its favourite affections, and direct them quite into another channel; a maſter, who himſelf repreſents his commands

by taking up the croſs and following him! to adhere to the ſtricteſt rules of godlineſs and ſobriety, of righteouſneſs and truth; not departing from them, in any allowed inſtance, great or ſmall, upon any temptation, for any advantage, to eſcape any inconvenience and evil, no, not even for the preſervation of life itſelf; but, upon a proper call of providence, to act as if *I hated even my own life!* Lord, it is hard to fleſh and blood; and yet I perceive and feel, there is one demand yet harder than this.

With all theſe precautions, with all theſe mortifications, the pride of my nature would find ſome inward reſource of pleaſure, might I but ſecretly think that I had been my own ſaviour; that my own wiſdom and my own reſolution had broken the bands and chains of the enemy; and that I had drawn out of my own treaſures the price with which my redemption was purchaſed. But muſt I lie down before another, as guilty and condemned, as weak and helpleſs? And muſt the obligation be multiplied, and muſt a Mediator have his ſhare too? Muſt I go to the croſs for my ſalvation, and ſeek my glory from the infamy of that? Muſt I be ſtripped of every pleaſing pretence to righteouſneſs, and ſtand in this reſpect upon a level with the vileſt of men? ſtand at the bar among the greateſt criminals, pleading guilty with them, and ſeeking deliverance by that very act of grace, whereby they have obtained it?

I dare not deliberately ſay this method is unreaſonable. My conſcience teſtifies that I have ſinned, and cannot be juſtified before God, as an innocent and obedient creature. My conſcience tells me that all theſe humbling circumſtances are fit; that it is fit a convicted criminal ſhould be brought upon his knees; that a captive rebel ſhould give up the weapons of his rebellion, and bow before his ſovereign, if he expects life. Yea, my reaſon as well as my conſcience tells me that it is fit and neceſſary, that if I am ſaved at all, I ſhould be ſaved from the power and love of ſin, as well as from the condemnation of it; and that if ſovereign mercy gives me a new life, after having deſerved eternal death, it is moſt fit I ſhould *yield myſelf to God as alive from the dead.* But, *O wretched man that I am, I feel a law in my members, that wars againſt the law of my mind*, and oppoſes the conviction of my reaſon and conſcience. Who ſhall deliver

me from this bondage? Who shall make me willing to do that which I know in my own soul to be most expedient? O Lord, subdue my heart, and let it not be drawn so strongly one way, while the nobler powers of my mind would direct it another! Conquer every licentious principle within, that it may be my joy to be wisely governed and restrained! Especially subdue my pride, that lordly corruption which so ill suits an impoverished and condemned creature; that thy way of salvation may be amiable to me in proportion to the degree in which it is humbling! I feel a disposition to *linger in Sodom;* but, *O be merciful to me,* and *pull me out of it,* before the storms of thy flaming vengeance fall, and there be no more escaping!

CHAP. X.

The Sinner seriously urged and entreated to accept of Salvation in this Way.

Since many, who have been impressed with these things, suffer the impression to wear off in vain, 1. Strongly as the case speaks for itself, sinners are to be entreated to accept this salvation, 2. Accordingly the reader is entreated, (1.) By the majesty and mercy of God, 3. (2.) By the dying love of our Lord Jesus Christ, 4. (3.) By the regard due to fellow-creatures, 5. (4.) By the worth of his own immortal soul, 6. The matter is solemnly left with the reader, as before God, 7. The sinner yielding to these entreaties, and declaring his acceptance of salvation by Christ.

1. THUS far have I often known convictions and impressions to arise (if I might judge by the strongest appearances) which, after all, have worn off again. Some unhappy circumstance of external temptation, ever joined by the inward reluctance of an unsanctified heart, to this holy and humbling scheme of redemption, has been the ruin of multitudes. And *through the deceitfulness of sin,* they have *been hardened,* till they seem to have been *utterly destroyed, and that without remedy.* And therefore, O thou immortal creature, who art now reading these lines, I beseech thee, that while affairs are in this critical situation; while there are these balancings of mind between accepting and rejecting that glorious gospel, which, in the integrity of my heart, I have now been laying before you,

you would once more give me an attentive audience, while I plead in God's behalf (shall I say?) or rather in your own; while *as an ambassador for Christ, and as though God did beseech you by me, I pray you in Christ's stead, that you would be reconciled to God;* and would not, after these awakenings, and these inquiries, by a madness, which it will surely be the business of a miserable eternity to lament, reject this compassionate counsel of God towards you.

2. One would indeed imagine there should be no need of importunity here. One would conclude, that as soon as perishing sinners are told that an offended God is ready to be reconciled; that he offers them a full pardon for all their aggravated sins; yea, that he is willing to adopt them into his family now, that he may at length admit them into his heavenly presence; all should, with the utmost readiness and pleasure, embrace so kind a message, and fall at his feet in speechless transports of astonishment, gratitude, and joy. But, alas! we find it much otherwise. We see multitudes quite unmoved, and the impressions which are made on many more, are feeble and transient. Lest it should be thus with you, O reader, let me urge the message with which I have the honour to be charged; let me entreat you to be reconciled to God, and to accept of pardon and salvation in the way in which it is so freely offered to you.

3. I entreat you, by the majesty of that God, in whose name I come; whose voice fills all heaven with reverence and obedience. He speaks not in vain to legions of angels; but if there could be any contention among those blessed spirits, it would be, who should be first to execute his commands. O let him not speak in vain to a wretched mortal! I entreat you "by the terrors of his wrath," who could speak to you in thunder; who could, by one single act of his will, cut off this precarious life of yours, and send you down to hell. I beseech you by his mercies, by his tender mercies; by the bowels of his compassion which still yearn over you, as those of a parent over a dear son, over a tender child, whom, notwithstanding his former ungrateful rebellions, *he earnestly remembers still.* I beseech and entreat you, by all this paternal goodness, that you do not (as it were) compel him to lose the character of the gentle parent in that of the righteous judge;

so that (as he threatens with regard to those whom he had just called his sons and his daughters) *a fire should be kindled in his anger, which should burn unto the lowest hell.*

4. I beseech you farther, by the name and love of our dying Saviour. I beseech you by all the condescension of his incarnation; by that poverty to which he voluntarily submitted, that you might be enriched with eternal treasures; by all his gracious invitations, which still sound in his word, and still coming warm from his heart, *are sweeter than honey, or the honeycomb.* I beseech you by all his glorious works of power and wonder, which were also works of love. I beseech you by the memory of the most benevolent person, and the most generous friend. I beseech you by the memory of what he suffered, as well as of what he said and did; by the agony which he endured in the garden, when his body was covered *with a dew of blood.* I beseech you by all that tender distress which he felt, when his dearest friends *forsook him and fled*, and his blood-thirsty enemies dragged him away, like the vilest slave or criminal. I beseech you by the blows and bruises, by the stripes and lashes, which this injured Sovereign endured while in their rebellious hands; by the shame of spitting, from which he hid not that kind and venerable countenance. I beseech you by the purple robe, the sceptre of reed, and the crown of thorns, which this King of Glory wore, that he might set us *among the princes of heaven.* I beseech you by the heavy burden of the cross, under which he panted, and toiled, and fainted, in the painful way to Golgotha, that he might free us from the burden of our sins. I beseech you by the remembrance of those rude nails that tore the veins and arteries, the nerves and tendons of his sacred hands and feet; and by that invincible, that triumphant goodness, which, while the iron pierced his flesh, engaged him to cry out, *Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.* I beseech you by the unutterable anguish which he bore, when lifted up upon the cross, and extended there as on a rack, for six painful hours,—that you open your heart to those attractive influences, which have drawn to him thousands and ten thousands. I beseech you by all that insult and derision which the Lord of Glory bore there; by that parching thirst, which could hardly obtain the relief of vinegar; by

that doleful cry, ſo aſtoniſhing in the mouth of the only begotten of the Father, *My God, my God, why haſt thou forſaken me?* I beſeech you by the grace that ſubdued and pardoned a dying malefactor; by that compaſſion for ſinners, by that compaſſion for you which wrought in his heart ſo long as its vital motion continued, and which ended not when he *bowed his head*, ſaying, *It is finiſhed, and gave up the ghoſt.* I beſeech you by the triumphs of that reſurrection, by which he was *declared to be the Son of God with power, by the Spirit of holineſs,* which wrought to accompliſh it; by that gracious tenderneſs which attempered all thoſe triumphs, when he ſaid to *her out of whom he had caſt ſeven devils*, concerning his diſciples who had treated him ſo baſely, *Go, tell my brethren, I aſcend unto my Father and your Father, unto my God and your God.* I beſeech you by that condeſcenſion with which he ſaid to Thomas, when his unbelief had ſuch an unreaſonable demand, *Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thine hand, and put it into my ſide; and be not faithleſs, but believing.* I beſeech you by that generous and faithful care of his people, which he carried up with him to the regions of glory, and which engaged him to ſend down his Spirit, in that rich profuſion of miraculous gifts, to ſpeed the progreſs of his ſaving word. I beſeech you by that voice of ſympathy and power with which he ſaid to Saul, while injuring his church, *Saul, Saul, why perſecuteſt thou me?* By that generous goodneſs which ſpared that proſtrate enemy, when he lay trembling at his feet, and raiſed him to ſo high a dignity as to be not inferior to the chiefeſt apoſtles. I beſeech you by the memory of all that Chriſt hath already done, by the expectation of all he will farther do for his people. I beſeech you at once, by the ſceptre of his grace, and by that ſword of his juſtice, with which all his incorrigible enemies ſhall be *ſlain before him*,—that you do not trifle away theſe precious moments while his Spirit is thus breathing upon you; that you do not loſe an opportunity which may never return, and on the improvement of which your eternity depends.

5. I beſeech you, by all the bowels of compaſſion which you owe to the faithful miniſters of Chriſt, who are ſtudying and labouring, preaching and praying, wearing out their time, exhauſting their ſtrength, and very probably, ſhorten-

ing their lives, for the salvation of your soul, and of souls like yours. I beseech you by the affection, with which all that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, long to see you brought back to him. I beseech you by the friendship of the living, and by the memory of the dead; by the ruin of those who have trifled away their days and have perished in their sins, and by the happiness of those who have embraced the gospel, and are saved by it. I beseech you by the great expectation of that important day, *when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven; by the terrors of a dissolving world;* by *the sound of the arch-angel's trumpet*, and of that infinitely more awful sentence, *Come ye blessed*, and *Depart ye cursed*, with which that grand solemnity shall close.

6. I beseech you, finally, by your own precious and immortal soul; by the sure prospect of a dying bed or a sudden surprise into the invisible state; and as you would feel one ray of comfort in your departing spirit, "when your flesh and your heart are failing" I beseech you by your own personal appearance before the tribunal of Christ, for a personal appearance it must be, even to them who now sit on thrones of their own; by all the transports of the blessed, and by all the agonies of the damned, the one or the other of which must be your everlasting portion. I affectionately entreat and beseech you, in the strength of all these united considerations, as you will answer it to me who may in that day be summoned to testify against you; and, which is unspeakably more, as you will answer it to your own conscience, as you will answer it to the eternal Judge;—that you dismiss not these thoughts, these meditations, and these cares, till you have brought matters to a happy issue; till you have made a resolute choice of Christ, and his appointed way of salvation, and till you have solemnly devoted yourself to God in the bonds of an everlasting covenant.

7. And thus I leave the matter before you, and before the Lord. I have told you my errand, I have discharged my embassy. Stronger arguments I cannot use; more endearing and more awful considerations I cannot suggest. Choose, therefore, whether you will go out, as it were, clothed in sackcloth, to cast yourself at the feet of him who now sends you these equitable and gracious terms of peace and pardon, or, whether you will hold it out till he

appears, ſword in hand, to reckon with you for your treaſons and your crimes, and for this neglected embaſſy among the reſt of them! Fain would I hope the beſt; nor can I believe that this labour of love ſhall be ſo entirely unſucceſsful, that not one ſoul ſhall be brought to the foot of Chriſt in cordial ſubmiſſion and humble faith. *Take with you, therefore, words, and return unto the Lord:* and O, that thoſe which follow might, in effect at leaſt, be the genuine language of every one that reads them.

The Sinner yielding to thoſe Entreaties, and declaring his Acceptance of Salvation by Chriſt.

BLESSED Lord, it is enough, it is too much! Surely there needs not this variety of arguments, this importunity of perſuaſion, to court me to be happy, to prevail upon me to accept of pardon, of life, of eternal glory. Compaſſionate Saviour, my ſoul is ſubdued; ſo that, I truſt, the language of thy grief is become that of my penitence, and I may ſay, *My heart is melted like wax in the midſt of my bowels.*

O gracious Redeemer! I have already neglected thee too long. I have too often injured thee; *I have crucified thee afreſh* by my guilt and impenitence, as if I had taken pleaſure in *putting thee to an open ſhame;* but my heart now bows itſelf before thee in humble, unfeigned ſubmiſſion. I deſire to make no terms with thee but theſe—that I may be entirely thine. I cheerfully preſent thee with a blank, entreating thee that thou wilt do me the honour to ſignify upon it what is thy pleaſure. Teach me, O Lord, "what thou wouldſt have me to do!" for I deſire to learn the leſſon, and to learn it that I may practiſe it. If it be more than my feeble powers can anſwer, thou wilt, I hope, give me more ſtrength, and in that ſtrength I will ſerve thee. O receive a ſoul which thou haſt made willing to be thine!

NO more, O bleſſed Jeſus! no more is it neceſſary to beſeech and entreat me. Permit me rather to addreſs myſelf to thee, with all the importunity of a periſhing ſinner, who at length ſees and knows *there is ſalvation in no*

ther! Permit me now, Lord, to come and throw myself at thy feet, like a helpless outcast, that hath no shelter but in thy generous compassion! like one *pursued by the avenger of blood*, and seeking earnestly an admittance *into the city of refuge.*

I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait; and in thy word do I hope, that thou wilt *receive me graciously*. My soul confides in thy goodness, and adores it. I adore the patience which has borne with me so long, and the grace that now makes me heartily willing to be thine, to be thine on thine own terms, thine on any terms. O secure this treacherous heart to thyself! O unite me to thee in such inseparable bonds, that none of the allurements of flesh and blood, none of the vanities of an ensnaring world, none of the solicitations of sinful companions, may draw me back from thee, and plunge me into new guilt and ruin! *Be surety*, O Lord, *for thy servant for good*; that I may still keep my hold on thee, and so on eternal life; till at length I know more fully, by joyful and everlasting experience, how complete a Saviour thou art! *Amen.*

CHAP. XI.

A solemn Address to those who will not be persuaded to fall in with the Design of the Gospel.

Universal success not to be expected, 1, yet as unwilling absolutely to give up any, the author addresses, (1.) To those who doubt of the truth of Christianity, urging an inquiry into its evidences, and directing to proper methods for that purpose, 2—4. (2.) To those who determine to give it up without further examination, 5, and presume to set themselves to oppose it, 6. (3.) To those who speculatively assent to Christianity as true, and yet will sit down without any practical regard to its most important and acknowledged truths. Such are dismissed with a representation of the absurdity of their conduct on their own principles, 7, 8, with a solemn warning of its fatal consequences, 9, 10, and a compassionate prayer (introduced 11) which concludes the chapter, and this part of the work.

1. I WOULD humbly hope that the preceding chapters will be the means of awakening some stupid and insensible sinners; the means of convincing them of

their need of gospel salvation, and of engaging some cordially to accept it. Yet I cannot flatter myself so far as to hope this should be the case with regard to all into whose hands this book shall come. What *am I*, alas, *better than my fathers*, or better than my brethren, who have in all ages been repeating their complaints with regard to multitudes, that they *have stretched out their hands all the day long to a disobedient and gainsaying people?* Many such may, perhaps, be found in the number of my readers; many on whom neither considerations of terror nor of love will make any deep and lasting impression; many who, as our Lord learned by experience to express it, *when we pipe unto them, will not dance; and when we mourn unto them, will not lament.* I can say no more to persuade them, if they make light of what I have already said. Here, therefore, we must part; in this chapter I must take my leave of them; and O that I could do it in such a manner as to fix at parting, some convictions upon their hearts; that though I seem to leave them for a little while, and send them back to review again the former chapters, as those in which alone they have any present concern, they might soon, as it were, overtake me again, and find a suitableness in the remaining part of this discourse, which at present they cannot possibly find. Unhappy creatures! I quit you, as a physician quits a patient whom he loves, and is just about to give over as incurable; he returns again and again, and re-examines the several symptoms, to observe whether there be not some one of them more favourable than the rest, which may encourage a renewed application.

2. So would I once more return to you. You do not find in yourself any disposition to embrace the gospel, to apply yourself to Christ, to give yourself up to the service of God, and to make religion the business of your life. But, if I cannot prevail upon you to do this, let me engage you at least to answer me, or rather to answer your own conscience, Why you will not do it? Is it owing to any secret disbelief of the great principles of religion? If it be, the case is different from what I have yet considered, and the cure must be different. This is not a place to combat with the scruples of infidelity. Nevertheless, I would desire you seriously to inquire how far these scruples extend. Do they affect only some particular doctrines of

the gospel on which my argument hath turned? Or do they affect the whole Christian revelation? Or do they reach yet farther, and extend themselves to natural religion as well as revealed, so that it should be a doubt with with you whether there be any God, and providence, and future state, or not? As these cases are all different, so it will be of great importance to distinguish the one from the other, that you may know on what principle to build as certain, in the examination of those concerning which you are yet in doubt. But, whatever these doubts are, I would farther ask you, How long have they continued, and what method have you taken to get them resolved? Do you imagine that in matters of such moment, it will be an allowable case for you to trifle on, neglecting to inquire into the evidence of these things, pleading your not being satisfied in that evidence, as an excuse for not acting according to them? Must not the principles of common sense assure you, that, if these things be true, (which, when you talk of doubting about them, you acknowledge to be possible,) they are of infinitely greater importance than any of the affairs of life, whether of business or pleasure, for the sake of which you neglect them? Why then do you continue indolent and unconcerned, from week to week, and from month to month, which probably conscience tells you is the case?

3 Do you ask what method you should take to be resolved? It is no hard question. Open your eyes: set yourself to think: let conscience speak; and verily do I believe that if it be not seared in an uncommon degree, you will find painful forebodings of the certainty both of natural and revealed religion, and of the absolute necessity of repentance, faith, and holiness, to a life of future felicity. If you are a person of any learning, you cannot but know by what writers, and in what treatises, these great truths are defended. And, if you are not, you may find in almost every town and neighbourhood, persons capable of informing you in the main evidences of Christianity, and of answering such scruples against it, as unlearned minds may have met with. Set yourself, then, in the name of God, immediately to consider the matter. If you study at all, bend your studies close this way; and trifle not with mathematics, or poetry, or history, or law,

or phyſic (which are all, comparatively, light as a feather) while you neglect this. Study the argument as for your life; for much more than life depends on it. See how far you are ſatisfied, and why that ſatisfaction reaches no farther. Compare evidences on both ſides. And, above all, conſider the deſign and tendency of the New-Teſtament, to what it would lead you, and all them that cordially obey it; and then ſay whether it be not good. And conſider how naturally its truth is connected with its goodneſs. Trace the character and ſentiments of its authors, whoſe living image (if I may be allowed the expreſſion) is ſtill preſerved in their writings; and then aſk your own heart, Can you think this was a forgery, an impious, cruel forgery? For ſuch it muſt have been, if it were a forgery at all, a ſcheme to mock God, and to ruin men, even the beſt of men, ſuch as reverenced conſcience, and would abide all extremities for what they apprehended to be truth. Put the queſtion to your own heart, Can I in my conſcience believe it to be ſuch an impoſture? Can I look up to an omniſcient God, and ſay, "O Lord, thou knoweſt that it is in reverence to thee, and in love to truth and virtue, that I reject this book, and the method to happineſs here laid down?"

4. But there are difficulties in the way. And what then? Have theſe difficulties never been cleared? Go to the living advocates for Chriſtianity, to thoſe of whoſe abilities, candour, and piety, you have the beſt opinion, if your prejudices will give you leave to have a good opinion of any ſuch; tell them your difficulties; hear their ſolutions; weigh them ſeriouſly, as thoſe who know they muſt anſwer it to God; and, while doubts continue, follow the truth as far as it will lead you, and take heed that you do not *impriſon it in unrighteouſneſs*. Nothing appears more inconſiſtent and abſurd, than for a man ſolemnly to pretend diſſatisfaction in the evidences of the goſpel, as a reaſon why he cannot in conſcience be a thorough Chriſtian; when yet at the ſame time he violates the moſt apparent dictates of reaſon and conſcience, and lives in vices condemned even by the Heathen! O ſirs! Chriſt has judged concerning ſuch, and judged moſt righteouſly and moſt wiſely: *They do evil, and therefore they hate the light, neither come they to the light, leſt their deeds ſhould be made manifeſt,*

and be reproved. But there is a light that will make manifeſt and reprove their works, to which they ſhall be compelled to come, and the painful ſcrutiny of which they ſhall be forced to abide.

5. In the mean time, if you are determined to inquire no farther into the matter now, give me leave, from a ſincere concern that you may not heap upon your head more aggravated ruin, to entreat you that you would be cautious how you expoſe yourſelf to yet greater danger by what you muſt yourſelf own to be unneceſſary; I mean, attempts to pervert others from believing the truth of the goſpel. Leave them, for God's ſake, and for your own, in poſſeſſion of thoſe pleaſures, and thoſe hopes, which nothing but Chriſtianity can give them, and act not as if you were ſolicitous to add to the guilt of an infidel the tenfold damnation, which they who have been the perverters and deſtroyers of the ſouls of others muſt expect to meet, if that goſpel, which they have ſo adventurouſly oppoſed, ſhould prove, as it certainly will, a ſerious, and to them, a dreadful truth.

6. If I cannot prevail here, but the pride of diſplaying a ſuperiority of underſtanding ſhould bear on ſuch a reader, even in oppoſition to his own favourite maxims of the innocence of error, and the equality of all religions conſiſtent with ſocial virtue, to do his utmoſt to trample down the goſpel with contempt; I would, however, diſmiſs him with one propoſal, which I think the importance of the affair may fully juſtify. If you have done with your examination into Chriſtianity, and determine to live and conduct yourſelf as if it were aſſuredly falſe, ſit down then and make a memorandum of that determination. Write it down:—"On ſuch a day of ſuch a year, I deliberately reſolved that I would live and die rejecting Chriſtianity myſelf, and doing all I could to overthrow it. This day I determined not only to renounce all ſubjection to, and expectation from, Jeſus of Nazareth, but alſo to make it a ſerious part of the buſineſs of my life, to deſtroy, as far as I poſſibly can, all regard to him in the minds of others, and to exert my moſt vigorous efforts in the way of reaſoning, or of ridicule, to ſink the credit of his religion, and, if it be poſſible, to root it out of the world; in calm, ſteady defiance of that day when, his followers ſay, he

ſhall appear in ſo much majeſty and terror, to execute the vengeance threatened to his enemies." Dare you write this and ſign it? I firmly believe that many a man, who would be thought a Deiſt, and endeavours to increaſe the number, would not: and if you in particular dare not do it, whence does that ſmall remainder of caution ariſe? The cauſe is plain. There is in your conſcience, ſome ſecret apprehenſion, that this rejected, this oppoſed, this derided goſpel may, after all, prove true: and if there be ſuch an apprehenſion, then let conſcience do its office, and convict you of the impious madneſs of acting as if it were moſt certainly and demonſtrably falſe. Let it tell you at large, how poſſible it is that *haply you may be found fighting againſt God;* that, bold as you are, in defying the terrors of the Lord, you may poſſibly fall into his hands, may chance to hear that deſpiſed ſentence, which, when you hear it from the eternal Judge, you will not be able to deſpiſe: I will repeat it again, in ſpite of all your ſcorn, you may hear the King ſay to you, *Depart accurſed, into everlaſting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.* And now go and pervert and burleſque the ſcripture; go and lampoon the character of its heroes, and ridicule the ſublime diſcourſes of its prophets and its apoſtles, as ſome have done who have left little behind them but the ſhort-lived monuments of their ignorance, their profaneneſs, and their malice: go and ſpread like them the banners of infidelity, and pride thyſelf in the number of credulous creatures liſted under them. But take heed, leſt the inſulted Galilean direct a ſecret arrow to thine heart, and ſtop thy licentious breath before it has finiſhed the next ſentence thou wouldſt utter againſt him.

7. I will now turn myſelf from the Deiſt or the Sceptic, and direct my addreſs to the nominal Chriſtian; if he may upon any terms be called a Chriſtian, who feels not, after all I have pleaded, a diſpoſition to ſubject himſelf to the government and the grace of that Saviour whoſe name he bears. O ſinner, thou art turning away from my Lord in whoſe cauſe I ſpeak; but let me earneſtly entreat thee ſeriouſly to conſider, why thou art turning away, *and to whom thou wilt go* from him, whom thou acknowledgeſt *to have the words of eternal life.* You call yourſelf a Chriſt-

ian, and yet will not by any means be perſuaded to ſeek ſalvation in good earneſt from and through Jeſus Chriſt, whom you call your Maſter and your Lord. How do you for a moment excuſe this negligence to your own conſcience? If I had urged you on any controverted point, it might have altered the caſe. If I had laboured hard to make you the diſciple of any particular party of Chriſtians, your delay might have been more reaſonable: nay, perhaps your refuſing to acquieſce, might have been an act of apprehended duty to our common Maſter. But is it matter of controverſy among Chriſtians whether there be a great, holy, and righteous God; and whether ſuch a being, whom we agree to own, ſhould be reverenced and loved, or neglected and diſhonoured? Is it matter of controverſy whether a ſinner ſhould deeply and ſeriouſly repent of his ſins, or whether he ſhould go on in them? Is it a diſputed point amongſt us, whether Jeſus became incarnate, and died upon the croſs, for the redemption of ſinners, or not? And if it be not, can it be diſputed by them who believe him to be the Son of God, and the Saviour of men, whether a ſinner ſhould ſeek to him or neglect him? Or whether one who profeſſes to be a Chriſtian ſhould depart from iniquity or give himſelf up to the practice of it? Are the precepts of our great Maſter written obſcurely in his word, ſo that there ſhould be room ſeriouſly to queſtion whether he requires a devout, holy, humble, ſpiritual, watchful, ſelf-denying life, or whether he allow the contrary? Has Chriſt, after all his pretenſions of bringing life and immortality to light, left it more uncertain than he found it, whether there be any future ſtate of happineſs and miſery, or for whom theſe ſtates are reſpectively intended? Is it matter of controverſy, whether God will or will not *bring every work into judgment, with every ſecret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil?* Or whether, at the concluſion of that judgment, *the wicked ſhall go away into everlaſting puniſhment, and the righteous into life eternal?* You will not, I am ſure, for very ſhame, pretend any doubt about thoſe things, and yet call yourſelf a Chriſtian. Why then will you not be perſuaded to lay them to heart, and to act as duty and intereſt ſo evidently require? O ſinner, the cauſe is too obvious; a cauſe, indeed, quite unworthy of being called a reaſon. It is becauſe thou art

blinded and befotted with thy vanities and thy luſts. It is becauſe thou haſt ſome periſhing trifle, which charms thy imagination and thy ſenſes, ſo that it is dearer to thee than God and Chriſt, than thy own ſoul and its ſalvation. It is, in a word, becauſe thou art ſtill under the influence of that carnal mind, which, whatever pious forms it may ſometimes admit and pretend, *is enmity againſt God, and is not ſubject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.* And therefore thou art in the very caſe of thoſe wretches concerning whom our Lord ſaid, in the days of his fleſh, *Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life;* and therefore *ye ſhall die in your ſins.*

8. In this caſe I ſee not what it can ſignify to renew thoſe expoſtulations and addreſſes, which I have made in the former chapters. As our bleſſed Redeemer ſays of thoſe who rejected his goſpel, *Ye have both ſeen and hated both me and my Father;* ſo may I truly ſay with regard to you. I have endeavoured to ſhow you, in the plaineſt and cleareſt words, both Chriſt and the Father; I have urged the obligations you are under to both; I have laid before you your guilt, and your condemnation; I have pointed out the only remedy; I have pointed out the rock on which I have built my own eternal hopes, and the way in which alone I expect ſalvation; I have recommended thoſe things to you, which, if God gives me an opportunity, I will, with my dying breath, earneſtly and affectionately recommend to my own children, and to all the deareſt friends that I have upon earth, who may then be near me: eſteeming it the higheſt token of my friendſhip, the ſureſt proof of my love to them: and if believing the goſpel to be true, you reſolve to reject it, I have nothing father to ſay, but that you muſt abide by the conſequence. Yet as Moſes, when he went out from the preſence of Pharaoh for the laſt time, finding his heart yet more hardened by all the judgments and deliverances with which he had formerly been exerciſed, denounced upon him God's paſſing through the land in terror to ſmite the firſt-born with death, and warned him of that great and lamentable cry which the ſword of the deſtroying angel ſhould raiſe throughout all his realm; ſo will I, ſinner, now when I am quitting thee, ſpeak to thee yet again, *whether thou wilt hear, or whether thou wilt forbear;* and de-

nounce that much more terrible judgment which the ſword of divine vengeance, already whetted and drawn, and bathed as it were in heaven, is preparing againſt thee; which ſhall end in a much more doleful cry, though thou wert greater and more obſtinate than that haughty monarch. Yes, ſinner, that I may with the apoſtle Paul, when *turning to others*, who are more likely to hear me, *ſhake my raiment, and ſay, I am pure from thy blood*; I will once more tell you what the end of theſe things will be. And O that I could ſpeak to the purpoſe! O that I could thunder in thine ear ſuch a peal of terror as might awaken thee, and be too loud to be drowned in all the noiſe of carnal mirth, or to be deadened by thoſe dangerous opiates, with which thou art contriving to ſtupify thy conſcience.

9. Seek what amuſements and entertainments thou wilt, O ſinner, I tell thee, if thou wert equal in dignity, and power, and magnificence, to the great monarch of Babylon, *thy pomp ſhall be brought down to the grave, and all the ſound of thy viols; the worm ſhall be ſpread under thee, and the worm ſhall cover thee.* Yes, ſinner, *the end of theſe things is death*; death in its moſt terrible ſenſe to thee, if this continue thy governing temper. Thou canſt not avoid it; and if it be poſſible for any thing that I can ſay to prevent, thou ſhalt not forget it. Your *ſtrength is not the ſtrength of ſtones, nor is your fleſh of braſs.* You are acceſſible to diſeaſe as well as others; and if ſome ſudden accident do not prevent it, we ſhall ſoon ſee how heroically you will behave yourſelf on a dying bed, and in the near view of eternity. You that now deſpiſe Chriſt, and trifle with his goſpel, we ſhall ſee you droop and languiſh; ſhall ſee all your reliſh for your carnal recreations and your vain companions loſt. And if, perhaps, one and another of them bolt in upon you, and is brutiſh and deſperate enough to attempt to entertain a dying man with a gay ſtory, or a profane jeſt, we ſhall ſee how you will reliſh it. We ſhall ſee what comfort you will have in reflecting on what is paſt, or what hope in looking forward to what is to come. Perhaps, trembling and aſtoniſhed, you will then be inquiring, in a wild kind of conſternation, *what you ſhall do to be ſaved*; calling for the miniſters of Chriſt, whom you now deſpiſe for the earneſtneſs with

which they would labour to save your soul; and it may be, falling into a delirium or dying convulsions before they can come Or perhaps we may see you flattering yourselves, through a long, lingering illness, that you shall still recover, and putting off any serious reflection and conversation, for fear it should overset your spirits; and the cruel kindness of friends and physicians, as if they were in league with Satan to make the destruction of your soul as sure as possible, may perhaps abet this fatal deceit.

10. And if any of these probable cases happen, that is, in short, unless a miracle of grace snatch you, *as a brand out of the burning*, when the flames have, as it were, already taken hold of you, all these gloomy circumstances which pass in the chambers of illness, and the bed of death, are but the forerunners of infinitely more dreadful things. O, who can describe them! who can imagine them! When surviving friends are tenderly mourning over the breathless corpse, and taking a fond farewell of it, before it is laid to consume away in the dark and silent grave, into what hands, O sinner, will thy soul be fallen! What scenes will open upon thy separate spirit, even before thy deserted flesh be cold, or thy sightless eyes are closed! It shall then know what it is to return to God to be rejected by him, as having rejected his gospel and his Son, and despised the only treaty of reconciliation; and that such a one so amazingly condescending and gracious. Thou shalt know what it is to be disowned by Christ, whom thou hast refused to entertain; and what it is, as the immediate consequence of that, to be left in the hands of the malignant spirits of hell. There will be no more friendship then; none to comfort, none to alleviate thy agony and distress; but, on the contrary, all around thee labouring to aggravate and increase them. Thou shalt pass away the intermediate years of the separate state in dreadful expectation, and bitter outcries of horror and remorse; and then thou shalt hear the trumpet of the archangel, in whatever cavern of that gloomy world thou art lodged. Its sound shall penetrate thy prison, where, doleful and horrible as it is, thou shalt nevertheless wish that thou mightest still be allowed to hide thy guilty head, rather than show it before the face of that awful Judge, before whom *heaven*

and earth are fleeing away. But thou muſt come forth, and be re-united to a body, now formed forever to endure agonies, which in this mortal ſtate would have diſſolved it in a moment. You would not be perſuaded to come to Chriſt before; you would ſtupidly neglect him, in ſpite of reaſon, in ſpite of conſcience, in ſpite of all the tendereſt ſolicitations of the goſpel, and the repeated admonitions of its moſt faithful miniſters; but now, ſinner, you ſhall have an interview with him; if that may be called an interview, in which you will not dare to lift up your head to view the face of your tremendous and inexorable Judge. There, at laſt, how diſtant ſoever the time of your life, and the place of your abode may have been, there ſhall we ſee how courageouſly your hearts will endure, and how *ſtrong your hands will be, when the Lord doeth this.* There ſhall I ſee thee, O reader, whoever thou art that goeſt on in thine impenitency, among thouſands and ten thouſands of deſpairing wretches, trembling and confounded. There ſhall I hear thy cries among the reſt, rending the very heavens in vain. The Judge will riſe from the tribunal with majeſtic compoſure, and leave thee to be hurried down to thoſe everlaſting burnings to which his righteous vengeance hath doomed thee, becauſe thou wouldſt not be ſaved from them. Hell ſhall ſhut its mouth upon thee forever, and the ſad echo of thy groans and outcries ſhall be loſt amidſt the hallelujahs of heaven, to all that find mercy of the Lord in that day.

11. This will moſt aſſured be the end of theſe things; and thou, as a Chriſtian, profeſſed to know and believe it. It moves my heart at leaſt, if it moves not thine. I firmly believe that every one, who himſelf obtains ſalvation and glory, will bear ſo much of his Saviour's image in wiſdom and goodneſs, in zeal for God, and a ſteady regard to the happineſs of the whole creation, that he will behold this ſad ſcene with calm approbation, and without any painful commotion of mind. But as yet I am fleſh and blood; and therefore my bowels are troubled, and mine eyes often overflow with grief, to think that wretched ſinners will have no more compaſſion upon their own ſouls; to think, that in ſpite of all admonition, they will obſtinately run upon final, everlaſting deſtruction. It would ſignify nothing to add a prayer here, or a meditation

for your uſe. Poor creature! You will not meditate! You will not pray! Yet, as I have often poured out my heart in prayer over a dying friend, when the force of his diſtemper has rendered him incapable of joining with me, ſo will I now apply myſelf to God for you, O unhappy creature! And if you diſdain ſo much as to read what my compaſſion dictates, yet I hope they who have felt the power of the goſpel on their own ſouls, as they cannot but pity ſuch as you, will join with me in ſuch cordial, though broken, petitions as theſe.

A Prayer in behalf of an impenitent Sinner in the caſe deſcribed above.

ALMIGHTY God! *with thee all things are poſſible;* to thee, therefore, do I humbly apply myſelf in behalf of this dear immortal ſoul, which thou here ſeeſt periſhing in in its ſins, and hardening itſelf againſt that everlaſting goſpel, which has been the power of God to the ſalvation of ſo many thouſands and millions. Thou art witneſs, O bleſſed God, thou art witneſs to the plainneſs and ſeriouſneſs with which the meſſage has been delivered. It is in thy preſence that theſe awful words have been written; and in thy preſence have they been read. Be pleaſed, therefore, to record it in the book of thy remembrance, that ſo if this wicked man dieth in his iniquity, after the warning has been ſo plainly and ſo ſolemnly given him, his blood may not be required at my hand, nor at the hand of that Chriſtian friend, whoever he is by whom this book has been preſented, with a ſincere deſire for the ſalvation of his ſoul. Be witneſs, O bleſſed Jeſus, *in the day in which thou ſhalt judge the ſecrets of all hearts*, that thy goſpel hath been preached to this hardened wretch, and ſalvation by thy blood hath been offered him, though he continue to deſpiſe it. And may thine unworthy meſſenger be unto God a ſweet ſavour of Chriſt, in this very ſoul, even though it ſhould at laſt periſh! But O that, after all his hardneſs and impenitence, thou wouldſt ſtill be pleaſed, by the ſovereign power of thine efficacious grace, to awaken and convert him! Well do we know, O thou Lord of univerſal nature,

that he who made the ſoul can cauſe the ſword of conviction to come near and enter into it. O that, in thine infinite wiſdom and love, thou wouldſt find out a way to interpoſe, and ſave this ſinner from death! from eternal death! O that, if it be thy bleſſed will, thou wouldſt immediately do it! Thou knoweſt, O God, he is a dying creature; thou knoweſt that if any thing be done for him, it muſt be done quickly; thou ſeeſt in the book of thy wiſe and gracious decrees, a moment marked which muſt ſeal him up in an unchangeable ſtate. O that thou wouldſt lay hold on him, while he is yet *joined to the living* and *hath hope!* Thy immutable laws, in the diſpenſation of grace, forbid that a ſoul ſhould be converted and renewed after its entrance on the inviſible world. O let thy ſacred Spirit work, while he is yet, as it were, within the ſphere of his operations! Work, O God, by whatever method thou pleaſeſt, only have mercy upon him! O Lord, have mercy upon him! that he ſink not into thoſe depths of damnation and ruin on the very brink of which he ſo evidently appears! O that thou wouldſt bring him, if that be neceſſary, and ſeem to thee moſt expedient, into any depths of calamity and diſtreſs! O that, with Manaſſeh, he may be *taken in the thorns, and laden with the fetters of affliction*, if that may but cauſe him *to ſeek the God of his fathers.*

But I preſcribe not to thine infinite wiſdom. Thou haſt diſplayed thy power in glorious and aſtoniſhing inſtances; which I thank thee that I have ſo circumſtantially known, and by the knowledge of them have been fortified againſt the raſh confidence of thoſe who weakly and arrogantly pronounce that to be impoſſible which is actually done. Thou haſt, I know, done that by a ſingle thought in retirement, when the happy man reclaimed by it, hath been far from means, and far from ordinances; which neither the moſt awful admonitions, nor the moſt tender entreaties, nor the moſt terrible afflictions, nor the moſt wonderful deliverances, had been able to effect.

Glorify thy name, O Lord, and glorify thy grace, in the method which to thine infinite wiſdom ſhall ſeem moſt expedient! Only grant, I beſeech thee, with all humble ſubmiſſion to thy will, that this ſinner may be ſaved! Or if not, that the labour of this part may not be altogether in vain; but that, if ſome reject it to their aggravated ruin,

others may hearken and live! That thoſe thy ſervants, who have laboured for their deliverance and happineſs, may view them in the regions of glory, as the ſpoils which thou haſt honoured them as the inſtruments of recovering; and may join with them in the hallelujahs of heaven, *to Him who hath loved us, and waſhed us from our ſins in his own blood, and hath made us*, of condemned rebels, and accurſed, polluted ſinners, *kings and prieſts unto God; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

CHAP. XII.

An Addreſs to a Soul ſo overwhelmed with a Senſe of the Greatneſs of its Sins, that it dare not apply itſelf to Chriſt with any Hope of Salvation.

The caſe described at large, 1—4, as it frequently occurs, 5, granting all that the dejected ſoul charges on itſelf, 6. The invitations and promiſes of Chriſt give hope, 7. The reader urged, under all his burdens and fears, to an humble application to him, 8, which is accordingly exemplified in the concluding reflection and prayer.

1. I HAVE now done with thoſe unhappy creatures who deſpiſe the goſpel, and with thoſe who neglect it. With pleaſure do I now turn myſelf to thoſe who will hear me with more regard. Among the various caſes which now preſent themſelves to my thoughts, and demand my tender, affectionate, reſpectful care, there is none more worthy of compaſſion, than that which I have mentioned in the title of this chapter; none which requires a more immediate attempt of relief.

2. It is very poſſible ſome afflicted creature may be ready to cry out, It is enough: aggravate my grief and my diſtreſs no more. The ſentence you have been ſo awfully deſcribing, as what ſhall be paſſed and executed on the impenitent and unbelieving, is my ſentence; and the terrors of it are my terrors. For *mine iniquities are gone up unto the heavens*, and my tranſgreſſions have reached unto the clouds. My caſe is quite ſingular. Surely there never was ſo great a ſinner as I. I have received ſo many mercies, I have enjoyed ſo many advantages, I have heard ſo many

invitations of gospel grace; and yet my heart has been so hard, and my nature is so exceeding sinful, and the number and aggravating circumstances of my provocations have been such, that I dare not hope. It is enough that God hath supported me thus long; it is enough that, after so many years of wickedness, I am yet out of hell. Every day's reprieve is a mercy at which I am astonished. I lie down and wonder, that death and damnation have not seized me in my walks the day past. I arise and wonder that my bed hath not been my grave; wonder that my soul is not separated from my flesh, and surrounded with devils and damned spirits.

3. I have indeed heard the message of salvation; but, alas, it seems no message of salvation to me. There are haappy souls that have hope, and their hope is indeed in Christ, and the grace of God manifested in him. But then they feel in their hearts an encouragement to apply to him; whereas I dare not do it. Christ and grace are things in which I fear I have no part, and must expect none. There are exceeding rich and precious promises in the word of God; but they are to me as a sealed book, and are hid from me as to any personal use. I know Christ is able to save; I know he is willing to save some; but that he should be willing to save me, such a polluted, such a provoking creature, as God knows, and as conscience knows, I have been, and to this day am; this I know not how to believe, and the utmost that I can do towards believing it is, to acknowledge that it is not absolutely impossible, and that I do not yet lie down in complete despair; though alas! I seem upon the very borders of it, and expect every day and hour to fall into it.

4. I should not, perhaps, have entered so fully into this case, if I had not seen many in it; and I will add, reader, for your encouragement, if it be your case, several who are now in the number of the most established, cheerful, and useful Christians.—And I hope divine grace will add you to the rest, if *out of these depths* you be enabled to *cry unto God:* and though like Jonah, you may seem to be *cast out from his presence*, yet still with Jonah, you *look towards his holy temple.*

5. Let it not be imagined that it is in any neglect of that blessed Spirit, whose office it is to be the great Com-

forter, that I now attempt to reaſon you out of this diſconſolate frame; for it is as the great ſource of reaſon that he deals with rational creatures, and it is in the uſe of rational means and conſiderations, that he may moſt juſtly be expected to operate. Give me leave, therefore, to addreſs myſelf calmly to you, and to aſk you, what reaſon you have for all theſe paſſionate complaints and accuſations againſt yourſelf? What reaſon have you to ſuggeſt that your caſe is ſingular, when ſo many have told you they have felt the ſame? What reaſon have you to conclude ſo hardly againſt yourſelf, when the goſpel ſpeaks in ſuch favourable terms? Or what reaſon to imagine that the gracious things it ſays are not intended for you? You know, indeed, more of the corruptions of your own heart than you know of the hearts of others; and you make a thouſand charitable excuſes for their viſible failings and infirmities, which you make not for your own; and it may be ſome of thoſe, whom you admire as eminent ſaints when compared with you, are, on their part, humbling themſelves in the duſt, as unworthy to be numbered among the leaſt of God's people, and wiſhing themſelves like you, in whom they think they ſee much more good and much leſs of evil than in themſelves.

6. But to ſuppoſe the worſt. What if you were really the vileſt ſinner that ever lived upon the face of the earth? What *if your iniquities had gone up into the heavens* every day, and your tranſgreſſions had reached unto the clouds, reached thither with ſuch horrid aggravations that earth and heaven ſhould have had reaſon to deteſt you as a monſter of impiety? Admitting all this, *is any thing too hard for the Lord?* Are any ſins of which a ſinner can repent, of ſo deep a dye, that the blood of Chriſt cannot waſh them away? Nay, though it would be daring wickedneſs and monſtrous folly for any *to ſin that grace might abound*, yet had you indeed raiſed you account beyond all that divine grace had ever yet pardoned, who ſhould *limit the Holy One of Iſrael?* or who ſhould pretend to ſay that it was impoſſible God might, for your very wretchedneſs, chooſe you out from others, to make you a monument of mercy and a trophy of hitherto unparalleled grace? The apoſtle Paul ſtrongly intimates this to have been the caſe with regard to himſelf; and why might not you likewiſe, if indeed *the chief of ſinners, obtain mercy, that in you, as the chief, Jeſus*

Christ might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them who shall hereafter believe.

7. Gloomy as your apprehensions are, I would ask you plainly, Do you in your conscience think that Christ is not able to save you? What, is he not *able to save, even to the uttermost, them that come unto God by him?* Yes, you will say, abundantly able to do it; but I dare not imagine that he will do it. And how do you know that he will not? He has helped the very greatest sinners of all, that have yet applied themselves to him; and he has made the offers of grace and salvation in the most engaging and encouraging terms: *If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink; let him that is athirst come: and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely: Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest:* and once more, *Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.* True, you will say, none that are given him by the Father; could I know I were of that number, I could then apply cheerfully to him. But, dear reader, let me entreat you to look into the text itself, and see whether that limitation be expressly added there. Do you there read, "None of them whom the Father hath given me shall be cast out?" The words are in a much more encouraging form; and why should you frustrate his wisdom and goodness by such an addition of your own? *Add not to his words, lest he reprove thee;* take them as they stand, and drink in the consolation of them. Our Lord knew into what perplexity some serious minds might possibly be thrown by what he had before been saying, *All that the Father hath given me shall come unto me;* and therefore, as it were on purpose to balance it, he adds these gracious words, *Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise*, by no means, on no consideration whatever *cast out.*

8. If, therefore, you are already discouraged and terrified at the greatness of your sins, do not add to their weight and number that one greater and worse than all the rest, a distrust of the faithfulness and grace of the blessed Redeemer. Do not, as far as in you lies, oppose all the purposes of his love to you. O distressed soul, to whom dost thou tremble to approach? Is there any thing so terrible in a crucified Redeemer, in *the Lamb that was slain?* If thou carriest thy soul, almost sinking under the burden of its guilt, to lay it down at his feet, what dost thou offer him

but the ſpoil which he bled and died to recover and poſſeſs? And did he purchaſe it ſo dearly, that thou might reject it with diſdain? Go to him directly, and fall down in his preſence, and plead that miſery of thine which thou haſt now been pleading in a contrary view, as an engagement to your own ſoul to make the application, and as an argument with the compaſſionate Saviour to receive you; go, and be aſſured, that *where ſin hath abounded, there ſhall grace much more abound.* Be aſſured, that if one ſinner can promiſe himſelf a more certain welcome than another, it is not he that is leaſt guilty and miſerable, but he that is moſt deeply humbled before God under a ſenſe of that miſery and guilt, and lies the loweſt in the apprehenſion of it.

Reflection on theſe Encouragements, ending in an humble and earneſt Application to Chriſt for Mercy.

O MY ſoul, what ſayeſt thou to theſe things? Is there not at leaſt a poſſibility of help from Chriſt? And is there a poſſibility of help any other way? Is any *other name given under heaven whereby we may be ſaved?* I know there is none. I muſt then ſay, like the lepers of Iſrael, If I ſit here, I periſh, and if I make my application in vain, I can but die. But peradventure he may ſave my ſoul alive. I will therefore ariſe, and go unto him; or rather, believing him here by his ſpiritual preſence, ſinful and miſerable as I am, I will this moment fall down on my face before him, and pour out my ſoul unto him.

Bleſſed Jeſus, I preſent myſelf unto thee as a wretched creature, driven indeed by neceſſity to do it. For, ſurely, were not that neceſſity urgent and abſolute, I ſhould not dare for very ſhame to appear in thine holy and majeſtic preſence. I am fully convinced that my ſins and my follies have been inexcuſably great, more than I can expreſs, more than I can conceive. I feel a ſource of ſin in my corrupt and degenerate nature, which pours out iniquity as a fountain ſends out its water, and makes me a burden and a terror to myſelf. Such aggravations have attended my tranſgreſſions, that it looks like preſumption ſo much as to

aſk pardon of them; and yet would it not be greater preſumption to ſay that they exceed thy mercy, and the efficacy of thy blood? to ſay that thou haſt power and grace enough to pardon and ſave only ſinners of a lower order, while ſuch as I lie out of thy reach? Preſerve me from that blaſphemous imagination! Preſerve me from that unreaſonable ſuſpicion! Lord, *thou canſt do all things, neither is there any thought of mine heart withholden from thee.* Thou art indeed, as thy word declares, *able to ſave to the uttermoſt;* and therefore, breaking through all the oppoſitions of ſhame and fear that would keep me from thee, I come and lie down as in the duſt before thee. *Thou knoweſt, O Lord, all my ſins, and all my follies.* I cannot, and, I hope I may ſay, I would not diſguiſe them before thee, or ſet myſelf to find out plauſible excuſes. Accuſe me, Lord, as thou pleaſeſt; and I will ingenuouſly plead guilty to all thine accuſations. I will own myſelf as great a ſinner as thou calleſt me; but I am ſtill a ſinner that comes unto thee for pardon. If I muſt die, it ſhall be ſubmitting and owning the juſtice of the fatal ſtroke If I periſh, it ſhall be *laying hold*, as it were, *on the horns of the altar;* laying myſelf down at thy footſtool, though I have been ſuch a rebel againſt thy throne. Many have received a full pardon there; have met with favour even beyond their hopes. And are all thy compaſſions, O bleſſed Jeſus, exhauſted? And wilt thou now begin to reject an humble creature who flies to thee for life, and pleads nothing but mercy and free grace? *Have mercy upon me*, O moſt gracious Redeemer, *have mercy upon me*, and *let my life be precious in thy ſight.* O do not reſolve to ſend me down to that ſtate of final miſery and deſpair, from which it was thy gracious purpoſe to deliver and ſave ſo many!

Spurn me not away, O Lord, from thy preſence, nor be offended when I preſume to lay hold on thy royal robe, and ſay that I cannot and *will not let thee go* till my ſuit is granted! O remember that my eternity is at ſtake! Remember, O Lord, that all my hopes of obtaining eternal happineſs, and avoiding everlaſting, helpleſs, hopeleſs deſtruction, are anchored upon thee; they hang upon thy ſmiles, or drop at thy frown. O have mercy upon me, for the ſake of this immortal ſoul of mine! Or, if not for the ſake of mine alone, for the ſake of many others, who may, on the

one hand, be encouraged by thy mercy to me, or on the other, may be greatly wounded and discouraged by my helpless despair! I beseech thee, O Lord, for thine own sake, and for the display of thy Father's rich and sovereign grace; I beseech thee by the blood thou didst shed on the cross; I beseech thee by the covenant of grace and peace, into which the Father did enter with thee for the salvation of believing and repenting sinners, save me! Save me, O Lord, who earnestly desires to repent and believe! I am indeed a sinner, in whose final and everlasting destruction thy justice might be greatly glorified; but O, if thou wilt pardon me, it will be a monument raised to the honour of thy grace, and the efficacy of thy blood, in proportion to the degree in which the wretch, to whom thy mercy is extended, was mean and miserable without it.—Speak, Lord, by thy blessed Spirit, and banish my fears! Look unto me with love and grace in thy countenance, and say to me, as in the days of thy flesh thou didst to many an humble supplicant, *Thy sins are forgiven thee; go in peace!*

CHAP. XIII.

The doubting Soul more particularly assisted in its Inquiries as to the Sincerity of its Faith and Repentance.

Transient impressions liable to be mistaken for conversion, which would be a fatal error, 1. General scheme for self-examination. 2. Particular inquiries; (1) What views there have been of sin? 3. (2) What views there have been of Christ? 4. As to the need the soul has of him, 5. And its willingness to receive him with a due surrender of heart to his service, 6. Nothing short of this sufficient, 7. The soul submitting to divine examination, the sincerity of its faith and repentance.

1. In consequence of all the serious things which have been said in the former chapters, I hope it will be no false presumption to imagine that some religious impressions may be made on hearts which had never felt them before; or may be revived where they have formerly grown cold and languid. Yet I am very sensible, and I desire that you may be so, how great danger there is of self-flattery on

this important head; and how neceſſary it is to caution men againſt too haſty a concluſion that they are really converted becauſe they have felt ſome warm emotion on their minds, and have reformed the groſs irregularities of their former conduct. A miſtake here might be infinitely fatal; it may prove the occaſion of that falſe peace, which ſhall lead a man to bleſs himſelf in his own heart, and to conclude himſelf ſecure, while all the threatnings and curſes of God's law are ſounding in his ears, and lie indeed directly againſt him; while in the mean time he applies to himſelf a thouſand promiſes, in which he has no ſhare; which may prove, therefore, like generous wine to a man in a high fever, or ſtrong opiates to one in a lethargy. The ſtoney ground received the word with joy, and a promiſing harveſt ſeemed to be ſpringing up; yet it ſoon withered away, and no reaper filled his arms with it. Now, that this may not be the caſe with you, that all my labours and yours hitherto may not be loſt, and that a vain dream of ſecurity and happineſs may not plunge you deeper in miſery and ruin, give me leave to lead you into a ſerious inquiry into your own heart; that ſo you may be better able to judge of your caſe, and to diſtinguiſh between what is at moſt being only near the kingdom of heaven, and becoming indeed a member of it.

2. Now this depends upon the ſincerity of your faith in Chriſt, when faith is taken in its largeſt extent, as explained above; that is, as comprehending repentance, and that ſteady purpoſe of new and univerſal obedience, of which, wherever it is real, faith will aſſuredly be the vital principle. Therefore to aſſiſt you in judging of your ſtate, give me leave to aſk you, or rather to entreat you to aſk yourſelf, What views you have had, and now have of ſin, and of Chriſt? and what your future purpoſes are with regard to your conduct in the remainder of life that may lie before you? I ſhall not reaſon largely upon the ſeveral particulars I ſuggeſt under theſe heads, but rather refer you to your own reading and obſervation, to judge how agreeable they are to the word of God, the great rule by which our characters muſt quickly be tried, and our eternal ſtate unalterably determined.

3. Inquire ſeriouſly, in the firſt place, what views you have had of ſin, and what ſentiments you have felt in your

ſoul with regard to it. There was a time when it wore a flattering aſpect, and made a fair, enchanting appearance, ſo that all your heart was charmed with it, and it was the very buſineſs of your life to practiſe it. But you have ſince been undeceived: you have felt it *bite like a ſerpent, and ſting like an adder:* you have beheld it with an abhorrence far greater than the delight which it ever gave you. So far it is well. It is thus with every true penitent, and with ſome, I fear, who are not of that number. Let me therefore inquire farther, whence aroſe this abhorrence? Was it merely from a principle of ſelf love? Was it merely becauſe you had been wounded by it? Was it merely becauſe you had thereby brought condemnation and ruin upon your ſoul? Was there no ſenſe of its deformity, of its baſeneſs, of its malignity, as committed againſt the bleſſed God, conſidered as a glorious, a bountiful, and a merciful Being? Were you never pierced by an apprehenſion of its vile ingratitude? And as for thoſe purpoſes which have ariſen in your heart againſt it, let me beſeech you to reflect how they have been formed, and how they have hitherto been executed. Have they been univerſal? Have they been reſolute? And yet, amidſt all that reſolution, have they been humble? When you declared war with ſin, was it with every ſin? And is it an irreconcileable war, which you determine by divine grace to puſh on, till you have entirely conquered it, or die in the attempt? And are you accordingly active in your endeavours to ſubdue and deſtroy it? If ſo, what are *the fruits worthy of repentance which you bring forth?* It does not, I hope, all flow away in floods of grief. Have you *ceaſed to do evil?* Are you *learning to do well?* Doth your reformation ſhow that you repent of your ſins; or do your renewed relapſes into ſin prove that you repent even of what you call your repentance? Have you an inward abhorrence of all ſin, and an unfeigned zeal againſt it? And doth that produce a care to guard againſt the occaſions of it and temptations to it? Do you watch againſt the circumſtances that have enſnared you? And do you particularly double your guard againſt *that ſin which does moſt eaſily beſet you?* Is that laid aſide, that the Chriſtian race may be run; laid aſide with a firm determination that you will return to it no more, that you will hold no more

parley with it, that you will never take another ſtep towards it?

4. Permit me alſo farther to inquire, what your views of Chriſt have been? What you think of him, and of your concern with him? Have you been fully convinced that there muſt be a correſpondence ſettled between him and your ſoul; and do you ſee and feel, that you are not only to pay him a kind of diſtant homage, and tranſient compliment, as a very wiſe, benevolent, and excellent perſon, whoſe name and memory you have a reverence for; but that, as he lives and reigns, as he is ever near you, and always obſerving you, ſo you muſt look to him, muſt approach him, muſt humbly tranſact buſineſs with him, and that buſineſs of the higheſt importance, on which your ſalvation depends?

5. You have been brought to inquire, *Wherewith ſhall I come before the Lord, and bow myſelf before the Moſt High God?* And once, perhaps, you were thinking of ſacrifices which your own ſtores might have been ſufficient to furniſh out. Are you now convinced they will not ſuffice; and that you muſt have recourſe to the Lamb which God hath provided? Have you had a view of Jeſus, as *taking away the ſin of the world*; as *made a ſin-offering for us, though he knew no ſin, that we might be made the righteouſneſs of God in him?* Have you viewed him as perfectly righteous in himſelf; and deſpairing of being juſtified by any righteouſneſs of your own, have you *ſubmitted to the righteouſneſs of God?* Has your heart ever been brought to a deep conviction of this important truth, that, if ever you are ſaved at all, it muſt be through Chriſt; that if ever God extend mercy to you at all, it muſt be for his ſake; that if ever you are fixed in the temple of God above, you muſt ſtand there as an everlaſting trophy of that victory which Chriſt has gained over the powers of hell, who would otherwiſe have triumphed over you?

6. Our Lord ſays, *Look unto me and be ye ſaved*; he ſays, *If I be lifted up, I ſhall draw all men unto me.* Have you looked to him as the only Saviour? Have you been drawn unto him by that ſacred magnet, the attractive influence of his dying love? Do you know what it is to come to Chriſt as a poor, *weary, and heavy laden ſinner, that you may find reſt?* Do you know what it is in a ſpiritual ſenſe to *eat the*

flesh and drink the blood of the Son of man; that is, to look upon Christ crucified as the great support of your soul, and to feel a desire after him, earnest as the appetite of nature after its necessary food? Have you known what it is cordially to surrender yourself to Christ, as a poor creature whom love has made his property? Have you committed your immortal soul to him, that he may purify and save it; that he may govern it by the dictates of his word, and the influences of his Spirit; that he may use it for his glory; that he may appoint it to what exercise and discipline he pleases while it dwells here in flesh? And that he may receive it at death, and fix it among those spirits, who with perpetual songs of praise surround his throne, and are his servants forever! Have you heartily consented to this? And do you, on this account of the matter, renew your consent? Do you renew it deliberately and determinately, and feel your whole soul, as it were, saying *Amen*, while you read this? If this be the case, then I can with great pleasure give you the right hand of fellowship, and salute and embrace you as a sincere disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, as one who is *delivered from the power of darkness, and is translated into the kingdom of the Son of God.* I can then salute you, in the Lord, as one to whom, as a minister of Jesus, I am commissioned and charged to speak comfortably, and to tell you, not that I absolve you from your sins, for it is a small matter to be judged of man's judgment, but that the blessed God himself absolveth you; that you are one to whom he hath said in his gospel, and is continually saying, *Your sins are forgiven you;* therefore go in peace, and take the comfort of it.

7. But if you are a stranger to these experiences, and to this temper which I have now described, the great work is yet undone; you are an impenitent and unbelieving sinner, and *the wrath of God abideth on you.* However you may have been awakened and alarmed, whatever resolutions you may have formed for amending your life, how right soever your notions may be, how pure soever your forms of worship, how ardent soever your zeal, how severe soever your mortification, how humane soever your temper, how inoffensive soever your life may be, I can speak no comfort to you. Vain are all your religious hopes, if there has not been a cordial humiliation before the presence of God for

all your sins; if there has not been this avowed war declared against every thing displeasing to God; if there has not been this sense of your need of Christ, and of your ruin without him; if there has not been this earnest application to him, this surrender of your soul into his hands by faith; this renunciation of yourself, that you might fix on him, the anchor of your hope; if there has not been this unreserved dedication of yourself to be at all times, and in all respects, the faithful servant of God through him; and if you do not with all this acknowledge that you are an unprofitable servant, who have no other expectation of acceptance or of pardon, but only through his righteousness and blood, and through the riches of divine grace in him. I repeat it again, that all your hopes are vain, and you are building on the sand. The house you have already raised, must be thrown down to the ground, and the foundation be removed and laid anew, or you and all your hopes will shortly be swept away with it, and buried under it in everlasting ruin.

The Soul submitting to Divine Examination, the Sincerity of its Repentance and Faith.

O LORD GOD, thou *searchest all hearts, and triest the reins of the children of men. Search me, O Lord, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.* Doth not my conscience, O Lord, testify in thy presence, that my repentance and faith are such as have been described, or at least, that it is my earnest prayer that they may be so? Come, therefore, O thou blessed Spirit, who art the author of all grace and consolation, and work this temper more fully in my soul! O represent sin to mine eyes in all its most odious colours, that I may feel a mortal and irreconcileable hatred to it! O represent the majesty and mercy of the blessed God in such a manner, that my heart may be alarmed, and that it may be melted! *Smite the rock, that the waters may flow:* waters of genuine, undissembled, and filial repentance! *Convince me*, O thou blessed Spirit, *of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment! Show me that I have undone*

myself; but that my help is found in God alone, in God through Christ, in whom alone he will extend compassion and help to me! According to thy particular office, *take of Christ and show it unto me!* Show me *his power to save!* Show me his willingness to exert that power! Teach my faith to behold him, as extended on the cross with open arms, and with a pierced, bleeding side; and so telling me, in the most forcible language, what room there is in his very heart for me! May I know what it is to have my whole heart subdued by love; so subdued, as to be *crucified with him;* to be *dead to sin*, and dead to the world, *but alive unto God through Jesus Christ!* In his power and love may I confide. To him may I, without any reserve, commit my spirit! His image may I bear; his laws may I observe; his service may I pursue; and may I remain through time and eternity a monument of the efficacy of his gospel, and a trophy of his victorious grace!

O blessed God! if there be any thing wanting towards constituting me a sincere Christian, discover it to me, and work it in me! Beat down, I beseech thee, every false and presumptuous hope, how costly soever that building may have been which is thus laid in ruins, and how proud soever I may have been of its vain ornaments! Let me know the worst of my case, be that knowledge ever so distressful; and if there be remaining danger, O let my heart be fully sensible of it, sensible while yet there is remedy!

If there be any secret sin ye lurking in my soul, which I have not sincerely renounced, discover it to me, and rend it out of my heart, though it should have shot its roots ever so deep, and should have wrapped them all around it, so that every nerve should be pained by the separation! Tear it away, O Lord, by a hand graciously severe! and by degrees, yea, Lord, by speedy advances, go on, I beseech thee, to perfect what is still lacking in my faith! Accomplish in me *all the good pleasure of thy goodness:* enrich me, O heavenly Father, with all the graces of thy Spirit; form me to the complete image of thy dear Son: and then, for his sake, come unto me, and manifest thy gracious presence in my soul, till it is ripened for that state of glory, for which all these operations are intended to prepare it!—*Amen.*

CHAP. XIV.

A more particular View of the several Branches of the Christian Temper; by which the Reader may be farther assisted in judging what he is, and what he should endeavour to be.

The importance of the case engages to a more particular survey, what manner of spirit we are of, 1, 2. Accordingly the Christian temper is described, (1.) By some general views of it; as a new and divine temper, 3, as resembling that of Christ, 4, and as engaging us to be spiritually minded, and to walk by faith, 5. A plan of the remainder, 6, in which the Christian temper is more particularly considered. (2.) With regard to the blessed God; as including fear, affection, and obedience, 7. Faith and love to Christ, 8, 9, joy in him, 10, and a proper temper towards the Holy Spirit, particularly as a spirit of adoption and of courage, 11—13. (3.) With regard to ourselves: as including preference of the soul to the body, humility, purity, 14, temperance, 15, contentment, 16, and patience, 17. (4.) With regard to our fellow-creatures; as including love, 18, meekness, 19, peaceableness, 20, mercy, 21, truth, 22, and candour in judging, 23. (5.) General qualifications of each branch, 24, such as sincerity, 25, constancy, 26, tenderness, 27, zeal 28, and prudence, 29. These things should frequently be recollected, 30. A review of all in a spiritual prayer.

1. WHEN I consider the infinite importance of eternity, I find it exceedingly difficult to satisfy myself in any thing which I can say to men, where their eternal interests are concerned. I have given you a view, I hope I may truly say, a just as well as a faithful view, of a truly Christian temper already. Yet, for your farther assistance, I would offer it to your consideration in various points of light, that you may be assisted in judging of what you are, and of what you ought to be. And in this I aim, not only at your conviction, if you are yet a stranger to real religion, but at your farther edification, if by the grace of God you are by this time experimentally acquainted with it.—Happy will you be, happy beyond expression, if, as you go on from one article to another, you can say, "This is my temper and character." Happy in no inconsiderable degree, if you can say, "This is what I desire, what I pray for, and what I pursue, in preference to every opposite view, though it be not what I have as yet attained."

2. Search then, and try *what manner of ſpirit you are of.* And may *he that ſearcheth all hearts* direct the inquiry, and enable you *ſo to judge yourſelf, that you may not be condemned of the Lord!*

3 Know in the general, that if you are a Chriſtian indeed, you have been *renewed in the ſpirit of your mind;* ſo renewed as to be regenerate *and born again.* It is not enough to have aſſumed a new name, to have been brought under ſome new reſtraints, or to have made a partial change in ſome particulars of your conduct. The change muſt be great and univerſal. Inquire, then, whether you have entertained new apprehenſions of things, have formed a practical judgment different from what you formerly did; whether the ends you purpoſe, the affections which you feel working in your heart, and the courſe of action to which, by thoſe affections, you are directed, be on the whole new or old? Again, if you are a Chriſtian indeed, you are *partaker of a divine nature,* divine in its original, its tendency, and its reſemblance. Inquire, therefore, whether God hath implanted a principle in your heart which tends to him, and which makes you like him. Search your ſoul attentively, to ſee if you have really the image there of God's moral perfections, of his holineſs and righteouſneſs, his goodneſs and fidelity; for *the new man is after God created in righteouſneſs and true holineſs,* and *is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him.*

4. For your farther aſſiſtance, inquire whether *the ſame mind be in you which was alſo in Chriſt;* whether you bear the image of God's incarnate Son, the brighteſt and the faireſt reſemblance of the Father, which earth or heaven has ever beheld? The bleſſed Jeſus deſigned himſelf to be a model for all his followers; and he is certainly a model moſt fit for our imitation; an example in our nature, and in circumſtances adapted to general uſe! An example recommended to us at once by its ſpotleſs perfection, and by the endearing relation in which he ſtands to us as our Maſter, our friend, and our head; as the perſon by whom our everlaſting ſtate is to be fixed, and in a reſemblance to whom our final happineſs is to conſiſt, if ever we are happy at all. Look, then, into the life and temper of Chriſt, as deſcribed and illuſtrated in the goſpel, and ſearch whether you can find any thing like it in your own life. Have you any

thing of his devotion, love, and reſignation to God? Any thing of his humility, meekneſs, and benevolence to men? Any thing of his purity and wiſdom, his contempt of the world, his patience, his fortitude, his zeal? And, indeed, all the other branches of the Chriſtian temper, which do not imply previous guilt in the perſon by whom they are exerciſed, may be called in to illuſtrate and aſſiſt your inquiries under this head.

5. Let me add, if you are a Chriſtian, you are in the main *ſpiritually minded, as knowing it to be life and peace; whereas to be carnally minded, is death.* Though you *live in the fleſh, yet will not war after it;* you will not take your orders and your commands from it. You will indeed attend to its neceſſary intereſts, as matters of duty, but it will ſtill be with regard to another and a nobler intereſt, that of the rational, immortal ſpirit. Your thoughts, your affections, your purſuits, your choice will be determined by a regard to things ſpiritual rather than carnal. In a word, *you will walk by faith and not by ſight.* Future, inviſible, and, in ſome degree, incomprehenſible objects will take up your mind. Your faith will act on the being of God, his perfections, his providences, his precepts, his threatenings, and his promiſes. It will act upon Chriſt, *whom having not ſeen, you will love* and honour. It will act on that unſeen world which it knows to be eternal, and therefore infinitely more worthy of your affectionate regard, than any of *thoſe things which are ſeen and are temporal.*

6. Theſe are general views of the Chriſtian temper, on which I would entreat you to examine yourſelf. And now I would go on to lead you into a ſurvey of the grand branches of it, as relating to God, our neighbour, and ourſelves; and of thoſe qualifications which muſt attend each of theſe branches; ſuch as ſincerity, conſtancy, tenderneſs, zeal and prudence. And I beg your diligent attention, while I lay before you a few hints, with regard to each, by which you may judge the better both of your ſtate and of your duty.

7. Examine then, I entreat you, "the temper of your heart with regard to the bleſſed God." Do you find there a reverential fear, and a ſupreme love and veneration for his incomparable excellencies, a deſire after him as the higheſt good, and a cordial gratitude towards him as your ſupreme

benefactor? Can you truſt his care? Can you credit his teſtimony? Do you deſire to pay an unreſerved obedience to all that he commands, and an humble ſubmiſſion to all the diſpoſals of his providence? Do you deſign his glory as your nobleſt end, and make it the great buſineſs of your life to approve yourſelf to him? Is it your governing care to imitate him, and to *ſerve him in ſpirit and in truth?*

8. Faith in Chriſt I have already deſcribed at large; and therefore ſhall ſay nothing farther, either of that perſuaſion of his power and grace, which is the great foundation of it; or of that acceptance of Chriſt under all his characters, or that ſurrender of the ſoul into his hands, in which its peculiar and diſtinguiſhing nature conſiſts.

9. If this faith in Chriſt be ſincere, "it will undoubtedly produce a love to him;" which will expreſs itſelf in affectionate thoughts of him; in ſtrict fidelity to him; in a careful obſervation of his charge; in a regard to his ſpirit, to his friends, and to his intereſts; in a reverence to the memorials of his dying love which he has inſtituted; and in an ardent deſire after that heavenly world where he dwells, and where he will at length *have all his people to dwell with him.*

10. I may add, agreeably to the word of God, that thus believing in Chriſt, and loving him, you will "alſo rejoice in him, in his glorious deſign, and in his complete fitneſs to accompliſh it; in the promiſes of his word, and in the privileges of his people." It will be matter of joy to you that ſuch a Redeemer has appeared in this world of ours; and your joy for yourſelves will be proportionable to the degree of clearneſs with which you diſcern your intereſt in him, and relation to him.

11. Let me farther lead you into ſome reflections on the temper of your heart towards the bleſſed Spirit. If we *have not the Spirit of Chriſt, we are none of his.* If we are not *led by the Spirit of God, we are not the children of God.* You will then, if you are a real Chriſtian, deſire that you may *be filled with the Spirit;* that you may have every power of your ſoul ſubject to his authority; that his agency on your heart may be more conſtant, more operative, and more delightful. And to cheriſh theſe ſacred influences, you will often have recourſe to ſerious conſideration and meditation;

you will abſtain from thoſe ſins which tend to grieve him; you will improve the tender ſeaſons in which he ſeems to breathe upon your ſoul; you will ſtrive earneſtly with God in prayer, that you may have him *ſhed on you* ſtill more *abundantly through Jeſus Chriſt*; and you will be deſirous to fall in with the great end of his miſſion, which was to *glorify Chriſt*, and to eſtabliſh his kingdom. Yo will deſire his influences as the Spirit of adoption, to render your acts of worſhip free and affectionate; your ſorrow for ſin overflowing and tender; your reſignation meek, and your love ardent; in a word, to carry you through life and death with the temper of a child who delights in his father, and who longs for his more immediate preſence.

12. Once more. If you are a Chriſtian indeed, you will be deſirous to obtain the ſpirit of courage. Amidſt all that humility of ſoul to which you will be formed, you will wiſh to commence a hero in the cauſe of Chriſt, oppoſing, with a vigorous reſolution, the ſtrongeſt efforts of the power of darkneſs, the inward corruption of your own heart, and all the outward difficulties you may meet with in the way of your duty, while in the cauſe and in the ſtrength of Chriſt, you go on *conquering and to conquer*.

13. All theſe things may be conſidered as branches of godlineſs; of that godlineſs which is *profitable for all things*, and hath the *promiſe of the life which now is, and of that which is to come*.

14. Let me now farther lay before you ſome branches of the Chriſtian temper, which relate more immediately to ourſelves. And here, if you are a Chriſtian indeed, you will undoubtedly "prefer the ſoul to the body, and things eternal to thoſe things that are temporal." Conſcious of the dignity and value of your immortal part, you will come to a firm reſolution to ſecure its happineſs, whatever is to be reſigned, or whatever is to be endured in that view. If you are a real Chriſtian, you will be alſo *clothed with humility*. You will have a deep ſenſe of your own imperfections, both natural and moral; of the ſhort extent of your knowledge, of the uncertainty and weakneſs of your reſolutions, and of your continual dependence upon God, and upon almoſt every thing about you. And eſpecially, you will be deeply ſenſible of your guilt; the remembrance of which will fill you with ſhame and confuſion, even when you have ſome

reaſon to hope it is forgiven. This will forbid all haughtineſs and inſolence in your behaviour to your fellow-creatures. It will teach you under afflictive providences, with all holy ſubmiſſion, to *bear the indignation of the Lord*, as thoſe that know they *have ſinned againſt him*. Again, if you are a Chriſtian indeed, you will labour after "purity of ſoul," and maintain a fixed abhorrence of all prohibited ſenſual indulgence. A recollection of paſt impurities will fill you with ſhame and grief; and you will endeavour for the future to guard your thoughts and deſires, as well as your words and your actions, and to abſtain, not only from the commiſſion of evil, but from the diſtant appearance and probable occaſions of it; as conſcious of the perfect holineſs of that God, with whom you converſe, and of the purifying nature of that hope which, by his goſpel, he hath taught you to entertain.

15. With this is nearly allied that "amiable virtue of temperance," which will teach you to guard againſt ſuch a uſe of meats and drinks as indiſpoſes the body for the uſe of the ſoul; or ſuch an indulgence in either, as will rob you of that precious jewel, your time, or occaſion an expenſe beyond what your circumſtances will admit, and beyond what will conſiſt with thoſe liberalities to the poor, which your relation and theirs to God and each other will require. In ſhort, you will guard againſt whatever has a tendency to increaſe a ſenſual diſpoſition; againſt whatever would alienate the ſoul from communion with God, and would diminiſh its zeal and activity in his ſervice.

16. The divine philoſophy of the bleſſed Jeſus will alſo teach you "a contented temper." It will moderate your deſires of thoſe worldly enjoyments, after which many feel ſuch an inſatiable thirſt, ever growing with indulgence and exceſs. You will guard againſt an immoderate care about thoſe things which would lead you into a forgetfulneſs of your heavenly inheritance. If Providence diſappoint your undertakings, you will ſubmit. If others be more proſperous, you will not envy them; but rather will be thankful for what God is pleaſed to beſtow upon them, as well as for what he gives you. No unlawful methods will be uſed to alter your preſent condition; and whatever it is, you will endeavour to make the beſt of it; remembering it is what infinite wiſdom and goodneſs have appointed you, and

that it is, beyond all compariſon, better than you have deſerved; yea, that the very deficiencies and inconveniencies of it, may conduce to the improvement of your future and complete happineſs.

17. With contentment, if you are a diſciple of Chriſt, *you will join patience too*, and *in patience will poſſeſs your ſoul.* You cannot indeed be quite inſenſible either of afflictions or of injuries; but your mind will be calm and compoſed under them, and ſteady in the proſecution of proper duty, though afflictions preſs, and though your hopes, your deareſt hopes and proſpects be delayed. Patience will prevent haſty and rath concluſions, and fortify you againſt ſeeking irregular methods of relief; diſpoſing you in the mean time, till God ſhall be pleaſed to appear for you, to go on ſteadily in the way of your duty; *committing yourſelf to him in well doing.* You will alſo be careful, *that patience may have its perfect work*, prevail in proportion to thoſe circumſtances which demand its peculiar exerciſe. For inſtance, when the ſucceſſions of evils are long and various, ſo that deep calls to deep, and all God's waves and billows ſeem to be going over you one after another; when God touches you in the moſt tender part; when the reaſons of his conduct to you are quite unaccountable; when your natural ſpirits are weak and decayed; when unlawful methods of redreſs ſeem near and eaſy; ſtill your reverence for the will of your heavenly Father will prevail againſt all, and keep you waiting quietly for deliverance in his own time and way.

18. I have thus led you into a brief review of the Chriſtian temper with reſpect to God and ourſelves; permit me now to add, that the goſpel will teach you another ſet of very important leſſons with reſpect to your fellow-creatures. They are all ſummed up in this, *Thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf;* and *whatſoever thou wouldſt* (that is, whatſoever thou couldſt in an exchange of circumſtances fairly and reaſonably deſire) *that others ſhould do unto thee, do thou likewiſe the ſame unto them.* The religion of the bleſſed Jeſus, when it triumphs in your ſoul, will conquer the predominancy of irregular ſelf-love, and will teach you candidly and tenderly to look upon your neighbour as another ſelf. As you are ſenſible of your own rights, you will be ſenſible of his; as you ſupport your own character, you will ſupport his. You will deſire his welfare, and be ready to relieve his ne-

ceſſity, as you would have your own conſulted by another. You will put the kindeſt conſtruction upon his moſt dubious words and actions; you will take pleaſure in his happineſs; you will feel his diſtreſs, in ſome meaſure, as your own. And moſt happy will you be, when this obvious rule is familiar to your mind, when this golden law is written upon your heart; and when it is habitually and impartially conſulted by you upon every occaſion, whether great or ſmall.

19. The goſpel will alſo teach you *to put on meekneſs*, not only with reſpect to God, ſubmitting to the authority of his word, and the diſpoſal of his providence, as was urged before, but alſo with regard to your brethren of mankind. Its gentle inſtructions will form you to calmneſs of temper under injuries and provocations, ſo that you may not be angry without or beyond juſt cauſe. It will engage you to guard your words, leſt you provoke and exaſperate thoſe you ſhould rather ſtudy by love to gain, and by tenderneſs to heal. Meekneſs will render you ſlow in uſing any rough and violent methods, if they can by any means be lawfully avoided; and ready to admit, and even to propoſe, a reconciliation, after they have been entered into, if there yet may be hope of ſucceeding. So far as this branch of the Chriſtian temper prevails in your heart, you will take care to avoid every thing which might give unneceſſary offence to others; you will behave yourſelf in a modeſt manner, according to your ſtation; and it will work both with regard to ſuperiors and inferiors; teaching you duly to honour the one, and not to overbear or oppreſs the other. And in religion itſelf, it will reſtrain all immoderate ſallies and harſh cenſures; and will break down that wrath of man, which, inſtead of working, ſo often oppoſes, the righteouſneſs of God, and ſhames and wounds that good cauſe in which it is boiſterouſly and furiouſly engaged.

20. With this is naturally connected "a peaceful diſpoſition." If you are a Chriſtian indeed, you will have ſuch a value and eſteem for peace, as to endeavour to obtain and preſerve it *as much as lieth in you*, as much as you fairly and honourably can. This will have ſuch an influence upon your conduct, as to make you not only cautious of giving offence, and ſlow in taking it, but earneſtly deſirous to re-

gain peace as ſoon as may be, when it is in any meaſure broken; that the wound may be healed while it is green, and before it begins to rankle and feſter. And more eſpecially this diſpoſition will engage you *to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*, with all that in *every place call on the name of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt*; for, if you truly love him, you will alſo love all thoſe whom you have reaſon to believe to be his diſciples and ſervants.

21. If you be yourſelves indeed of that number, you will alſo *put on bowels of mercy*. The mercies of God, and thoſe of the bleſſed Redeemer, will work on your heart, to mould it to ſentiments of compaſſion and generoſity, ſo that you will feel the wants and ſorrows of others; you will deſire to relieve their neceſſities, and, as you have opportunity, you will do good both to their bodies and their ſouls; expreſſing your kind affections by ſuitable actions, which may both evidence their ſincerity, and render them effectual.

22. As a Chriſtian, you will alſo maintain truth inviolable, not only in your ſolemn teſtimonies, when confirmed by an oath, but likewiſe in common converſation. You will remember, too, that your promiſes bring an obligation upon you, which you are by no means at liberty to break through. On the whole, you will be careful to keep a ſtrict correſpondence between your words and your actions, in ſuch a manner as becomes a ſervant of the God of truth.

23. Once more, as amidſt the ſtricteſt care to obſerve all the divine precepts, you will ſtill find many imperfections, on account of which you will be obliged to pray that *God would not enter into ſtrict judgment with you*, as well knowing *that in his ſight you cannot be juſtified*; you will be careful not to judge others in ſuch a manner as ſhould awaken the ſeverity of his judgment againſt yourſelf. You will not, therefore, judge them pragmatically, that is, when you have nothing to do with their actions; nor raſhly, without inquiring into circumſtances; nor partially, without weighing them attentively and fairly; nor uncharitably, putting the worſt conſtruction upon things in their own nature dubious, deciding upon intentions as evil, farther than they certainly appear to be ſo, pronouncing on the ſtate of men, or on the whole of their character, from any particular action, and involving the innocent with the guilty. There is a moderation contrary to all theſe ex-

tremes, which the gospel recommends; and if you receive the gospel in good earnest into your heart, it will lay the ax at the root of such evils as these.

24. Having thus briefly illustrated the principal branches of the Christian temper and character, I shall conclude the representation with reminding you of some general qualifications, which must be mingled with all, and give a tincture to each of them; such as sincerity, constancy, tenderness, zeal, and prudence.

25. Always remember, "that sincerity is the very soul of true religion." A single intention to please God, and to approve ourselves to him, must animate and govern all that we do in it. Under the influence of this principle, you will impartially inquire into every intimation of duty, and apply to the practice of it so far as it is known to you. Your heart will be engaged in all you do. Your conduct, in private and in secret, will be agreeable to your most public behaviour. A sense of the divine authority will teach you to *esteem all God's precepts concerning all things to be right, and to hate every false way.*

26. Thus are you *in simplicity and godly sincerity to have your conversation in the world.* And you are also to charge it upon your soul to be *steadfast and immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.* There must not only be some sudden fits and starts of devotion, or something which looks like it, but religion must be an habitual and permanent thing. There must be a purpose to adhere to it at all times. It must be made the stated and ordinary business of life. Deliberate and presumptuous sins must be carefully avoided; a guard must be maintained against the common infirmities of life; and falls of one kind or of another must be matter of proportionable humiliation before God, and must occasion renewed resolution for his service. And thus you are to go on to the end of your life, not discouraged by the length and difficulty of the way, nor allured on the one hand or terrified on the other, by all the various temptations which may surround and assault you. Your soul must be fixed on this basis, and you are still to behave yourself as one who knows he serves an unchangeable God, and who expects from him *a kingdom which cannot be moved.*

27. Again, so far as the gospel prevails on your heart, "your spirit will be tender, and the stone will be transformed into flesh." You will desire that your apprehensions of divine things may be quick, your affections ready to take proper impressions, your conscience always easily touched, and, on the whole, your resolutions pliant to the divine authority, and cordially willing to be, and to do, whatever God shall appoint. You will have a tender regard to the word of God, a tender caution against sin, a tender guard against the snares of prosperity, a tender submission to God's afflicting hand; in a word, you will be tender wherever the divine honour is concerned; and careful neither to do any thing yourself, nor to allow any thing in another, so far as you have influence, by which God should be offended, or religion reproached.

28. Nay, more than all this, you will, so far as true Christianity governs in your mind, "exert an holy zeal in the service of your Redeemer and your Father." *You will be zealously affected in every good thing*, in proportion to its apprehended goodness and importance. You will be zealous especially to correct what is irregular in yourselves, and to act to the utmost of your ability for the cause of God. Nor will you be able to look with an indifferent eye on the conduct of others in this view; but so far as charity, meekness, and prudence will admit, you will testify your disapprobation of every thing in it, which is dishonourable to God and injurious to men. And you will labour not only to reclaim men from such courses, but to engage them to religion, and to quicken them in it.

29. And, once more, you will desire "to use the prudence which God hath given you," in judging what is, in present circumstances, your duty to God, your neighbour, and yourself; what will be, on the whole, the most acceptable manner of discharging it, and how far it may be most advantageously pursued: as remembering that he is indeed the wisest and happiest man who, by a constant attention of thought, discovers the greatest opportunities of doing good, and with ardent and animated resolution breaks through every opposition that he may improve these opportunities.

30. This is such a view of the Christian temper as could conveniently be thrown within such narrow limits;

and, I hope, it may assist many in the great and important work of self examination. Let your own conscience answer how far you have already attained it, and how far you desire it; and let the principal topics here touched upon, be fixed in your memory and in your heart, that you may be mentioning them before God in your daily addresses to the throne of grace, in order to receive from him all necessary assistance for bringing them into practice.

A Prayer chiefly in Scripture Language, in which the several Branches of the Christian Temper are more briefly enumerated, in the Order laid down above.

BLESSED GOD, I humbly adore thee, as the great *Father of lights and the Giver of every good and perfect gift.* From thee, therefore, I seek every blessing, and especially those which may lead me to thyself, and prepare me for the eternal enjoyment of thee. I adore thee as *the God who searches the heart, and tries the reins of the children of men. Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. May I know what manner of spirit I am of,* and be preserved from mistaking, where the error might be infinitely fatal.

May I, O Lord, *be renewed in the spirit of my mind! A new heart do thou give me, and a new spirit do thou put within me! Make me partaker of a divine nature;* and *as he who hath called me is holy, may I be holy in all manner of conversation;* may *the same mind be in me which was also in Christ Jesus;* may I *so walk even as he walked! Deliver me from being carnally minded, which is death;* and make me *spiritually minded, since that is life and peace!* And may I, while I pass through this world of sense, *walk by faith and not by sight;* and be *strong in faith giving glory to God!*

May *thy grace,* O Lord, *which hath appeared unto all men,* and appeared to me with such glorious evidence and lustre, *effectually teach me to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly! Work in mine heart that godliness which is profitable unto all things; and teach me, by the influences of thy blessed Spirit, to love thee, the Lord my God, with all my heart, and with all my soul, and with all my mind, and with all my strength; may I yield myself unto thee as alive from the dead; and present my body a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable in thy sight,*

which is my moſt reaſonable ſervice. May I entertain the moſt faithful and affectionate regard to the bleſſed Jeſus, thine incarnate Son, *the brightneſs of thy glory, and the expreſs image of thy perſon!* Though I have not ſeen him, may I love him; and in *him, though now I ſee him not, yet believing may I rejoice with joy unſpeakable and full of glory;* and may *the life which I live in the fleſh*, be daily *by the faith of the Son of God!* May I *be filled with the Spirit; and may I be led by it;* and ſo may it be evident to others, and eſpecially to my own ſoul, that I am a child of God, and an heir of glory. May I *not receive the ſpirit of bondage unto fear, but the Spirit of adoption, whereby I may be enabled to cry, Abba, Father!* May he work in me as *the Spirit of love, and of power, and of a ſound mind*, that ſo I may *add to my faith virtue!* May I *be ſtrong and very courageous*, and quit myſelf *like a man*, and like a Chriſtian, in the work to which I am called, and in that warfare which I had in view when I enliſted under the banner of the great Captain of my ſalvation!

Teach me, O Lord, ſeriouſly to conſider the nature of my own ſoul, and to ſet a ſuitable value upon it! May I *labour not only*, or chiefly, *for the meat that periſheth, but for that which endureth to eternal life!* May I *humble myſelf under thy mighty hand*, and be *clothed with humility;* decked *with the ornament of a meek and quiet ſpirit, which in the ſight of God is of great price!* May I *be pure in heart, that I may ſee God; mortifying my members which are on the earth*, ſo that *if a right eye offend me, I may pluck it out; and if a right hand offend me, I may cut it off!* May I be *temperate in all things, content with ſuch things as I have*, and inſtructed to be ſo in *whatſoever ſtate I am!* May *patience alſo have its perfect work in me, that I may be* in that reſpect *complete, and wanting nothing!*

Form me, O Lord, I beſeech thee, to a proper temper toward my fellow-creatures! May I *love my neighbour as myſelf; and whatſoever I would that others ſhould do unto me, may I alſo do the ſame unto them.* May I *put on meekneſs* under the greateſt injuries and provocations; *and, if it be poſſible, as much as lieth in me, may I live peaceably with all men!* May I be *merciful as my Father in heaven is merciful!* May I *ſpeak the truth from my heart;* and may I *ſpeak it in love;* guarding againſt every inſtance of a cenſorious and malignant diſpoſition: and taking care not *to judge* ſeverely, as I would *not be judged* with a ſeverity which thou, Lord, knoweſt, and which mine own conſcience knows, I ſhould not be able to ſupport!

I entreat thee, O Lord, to work in me all thoſe qualifications of the Chriſtian temper, which may render it peculiarly accep-

table to thee, and may prove ornamental to my profession in the world. Renew, *I beseech thee, a right spirit within me;* and make me *an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no* allowed *guile!* And while I feast on *Christ, as my passover sacrificed for me*, may I *keep the feast with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth!* Make me, I beseech thee, O thou Almighty and unchangeable God, *steadfast and immoveable, always abounding in thy work, as knowing my labour in the Lord will not be* finally *in vain!* May my *heart be tender*, easily impressed with thy word and providences, touched with an affectionate concern for thy glory, and sensible of every impulse of thy Spirit! May I *be zealous for my God*, with a *zeal according to knowledge and charity;* and teach me in thy service to join the *wisdom of the serpent* with the boldness of the lion, and the *innocence of the dove!* Thus render me, by thy grace, a shining image of my dear Redeemer; and at length bring me to wear the bright resemblance of his holiness and his glory in that world where he dwells; that I may ascribe everlasting honours to him, and to thee, O thou Father of mercies, whose invaluable gift he is, and to thine Holy Spirit, though whose gracious influences I would humbly hope I may call thee my Father, and Jesus my Saviour!—*Amen.*

CHAP. XV.

The Reader reminded how much he needs the Assistance of the Spirit of God, to form him to the Temper described above, and what Encouragement he has to expect it.

Forward resolutions may prove in effectual, 1. Yet religion is not to be given up in despair, but divine grace sought, 2. A general view of its reality and necessity, from reason, 3. and scripture, 4. The Spirit to be sought as the Spirit of Christ, 5. and in that view, the great strength of the soul, 6. The encouragement there is to hope for the communication of it, 7. A concluding exhortation to pray for it, 8. And an humble address to God pursuant to that exhortation.

1. I HAVE now laid before you a plan of that temper and character which the gospel requires, and which, if you are a true Christian, you will desire and pursue. Surely there is in the very description of it, something which must powerfully strike every mind, which has any

taſte for what is truly beautiful and excellent. And I queſtion not but you, my dear reader, will feel ſome impreſſion of it upon your heart. You will immediately form ſome lively purpoſe of endeavouring after it; and perhaps you may imagine you ſhall certainly and quickly attain to it. You ſee how reaſonable it is, and what deſirable conſequences neceſſarily attend it, and the aſpect which it bears on your preſent enjoyment and your future happineſs; and therefore are determined you will act accordingly. But give me leave ſeriouſly to remind you how many there have been (would to God that ſeveral of the inſtances had not happened within the compaſs of my own perſonal obſervation!) *whoſe goodneſs hath been like a morning cloud, and the early dew, which ſoon paſſeth away.* There is not room, indeed, abſolutely to apply the words of Joſhua, taken in the moſt rigorous ſenſe, when he ſaid to Iſrael (that he might humble their too haſty and ſanguine reſolutions) *you cannot ſerve the Lord.* But I will venture to ſay you cannot eaſily do it. Alas! you know not the difficulties you have to break through; you know not the temptations which Satan will throw in your way; you know not how importunate your vain and ſinful companions will be to draw you back into the ſnares you may attempt to break; and, above all, you know not the ſubtile artifices which your own corruptions will practiſe upon you, in order to recover their dominion over you. You think the views you now have of things will be laſting, becauſe the principles and objects to which they refer, are ſo; but perhaps to-morrow may undeceive you, or rather deceive you anew. To-morrow may preſent ſome trifle in a new dreſs, which ſhall amuſe you into a forgetfulneſs of all this; nay, perhaps, before you lie down on your bed, the impreſſions you now feel may wear off. The corrupt deſires of your own heart, now perhaps a little charmed down, and lying, as it were, dead, may ſpring up again with new violence, as if they had ſlept only to recruit their vigour; and if you are not ſupported by a better ſtrength than your own, this ſtruggle for liberty will only make your future chains the heavier, the more ſhameful, and the more fatal.

2. What then is to be done? Is the convinced ſinner to lie down in deſpair? to ſay, "I am a helpleſs captive,

and by exerting myself with violence, may break my limbs sooner than my bonds, and increase the evil I would remove?" God forbid! You cannot, I am persuaded, be so little acquainted with Christianity as not to know, that the doctrine of divine assistance bears a very considerable part in it. You have often, I doubt not, read of *the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, as making us free from the law of sin and death*; and have been told that *through the Spirit, we mortify the deeds of the body*; you have read of *doing all things through Christ who strengtheneth us*; whose *grace is sufficient for us, and whose strength is made perfect through weakness*; permit me, therefore, now to call down your attention to this, as a truth of the clearest evidence, and the utmost importance.

3. Reason, indeed, as well as the whole tenor of scripture, agrees with this. The whole created world has a necessary dependence on God; from him even the knowledge of the natural things is derived, and skill in them is to be ascribed to him. Much more loudly does so great and so excellent a work, as the new forming of the human mind, bespeak its Divine Author. When you consider how various the branches of the Christian temper are, and how contrary many of them also are to that temper which hath prevailed in your heart and governed your life in time past, you must really see divine influences as necessary to produce and nourish them, as the influences of the sun and rain are to call up the variety of plants, and flowers, and grain, and fruits, by which the earth is adorned and our life supported. You will yet be more sensible of this, if you reflect on the violent opposition which this happy work must expect to meet with, of which I shall presently warn you more largely, and which, if you have not already experienced, it must be because you have but very lately begun to think of religion.

4. Accordingly, if you give yourself leave to consult scripture on this head (and if you would live like a Christian, you must be consulting it every day, and forming your notions and actions by it) you will see, that the whole tenor of it teaches that dependence upon God which I am now recommending. You will particularly see, that the production of religion in the soul is matter of divine prom-

iſe; that when it has been effected, ſcripture aſcribes it to a divine agency; and that the increaſe of grace and piety in the hearts of thoſe who are truly regenerate, is alſo ſpoken of as the work of God, who begins and carries it on until the day of Jeſus Chriſt.

5. In conſequence of all theſe views, lay it down to yourſelf as a moſt certain principle, that no attempt in religion is to be made in your own ſtrength. If you forget this, and God purpoſes finally to ſave you, he will humble you by repeated diſappointments, till he teach you better. You will be aſhamed of one ſcheme and effort, and of another, till you ſettle upon the true baſis. He will alſo probably ſhow you, not only in the general that your ſtrength is to be derived from heaven; but particularly, that it is the office of the bleſſed Spirit to purify the heart, and to invigorate holy reſolutions; and alſo, that in all theſe operations he is to be conſidered as the Spirit of Chriſt, working under his direction, and as a vital communication from him, under the character of the great Head of the Church, the grand treaſurer and diſpenſer of theſe holy and beneficial influences. On which account it is called the *ſupply of the Spirit of Jeſus Chriſt*, who is *exalted at the right hand of the Father, to give repentance and remiſſion of ſins*; in *whoſe grace alone we can be ſtrong, and of whoſe fulneſs we receive even grace for grace.*

6. Reſolve, therefore, ſtrenuouſly for the ſervice of God, and for the care of your ſoul; but reſolve modeſtly and humbly. *Even the youths ſhall faint and be weary, and the young men utterly fall; but they who wait on the Lord* are the perſons who renew their ſtrength. When a ſoul is almoſt afraid to declare in the preſence of the Lord, that it will not do this or that which has formerly offended him; when it is afraid abſolutely to promiſe that it will perform this or that duty with vigour and conſtancy; but only expreſſes its humble and earneſt deſire that it may, by grace, be enabled to avoid the one, or purſue the other; then, ſo far as my obſervation and experience have reached, it is the beſt way to learn the happy art to conquer temptation, and of diſcharging duty.

7. On the other hand, let not your dependence upon this Spirit, and your ſenſe of your own weakneſs and inſufficiency for any thing ſpiritually good without his con-

tinued aid, discourage you from devoting yourself to God, and engaging in a religious life, considering what abundant reason you have to hope that these gracious influences will be communicated to you. The light of nature, at the same time that it teaches the need we have of help from God in a virtuous course, may lead us to conclude, that so benevolent a Being, who bestows on the most unworthy and careless part of mankind so many blessings, will take a peculiar pleasure in communicating, to such as humbly ask them, those gracious assistances which may form their deathless souls into his own resemblance, and fit them for that happiness to which their rational nature is suited, and for which it was in its first constitution intended.

The word of God will much more abundantly confirm such an hope. You there hear divine wisdom crying, even to those who had trifled with her instructions, *Turn ye at my reproof, and I will pour out my Spirit upon you.* You hear the Apostle saying, *Let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in every time of need.* Yea, you there hear our Lord himself urging, in his sweet and convincing manner, *If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him.*—This gift and promise of the Spirit was given unto Christ, when he ascended up on high, in trust for all his true disciples. God hath *shed it abroad upon us in him;* and I may add, that the very desire you feel after the farther communication of the Spirit, is the result of the first fruits of it already given; so that you may, with peculiar propriety, interpret it as a special call, to *open your mouth wide that he may fill it.* You thirst, and therefore you may cheerfully plead that Jesus hath invited you to come unto him and drink; with a promise, not only that you shall drink if you come unto him, but also that *out of your belly shall flow* as it were *rivers of living water*, for the edification and refreshment of others.

8. Go forth, therefore, with humble cheerfulness, to the prosecution of all the duties of the Christian life. Go, and prosper *in the strength of the Lord, making mention of his righteousness, and of his only.* And, as a token of farther communications, may your heart be quickened to the

moſt earneſt deſires after the bleſſings I have now been recommending to your purſuit! May you be ſtirred up to pour out your ſoul before God in ſuch holy breathings as theſe! And may they be your daily language in his gracious preſence!

An humble Supplication for the Influence of Divine Grace, to form and ſtrengthen Religion in the Soul.

BLESSED God! I ſincerely acknowledge before thee mine own weakneſs and inſufficiency for any thing that is ſpiritually good. I have experienced it a thouſand times; and yet my fooliſh heart would again truſt itſelf, and form reſolutions in its own ſtrength. But let this be the firſt fruits of thy gracious influence upon it, to bring it to an humble diſtruſt of itſelf, and to a repoſe on thee!

Abundantly do I rejoice, O Lord, in the kind aſſurances which thou giveſt me of thy readineſs to beſtow liberally and richly ſo great a benefit. I do therefore, according to thy condeſcending invitation, *come with boldneſs to the throne of grace, that I may find grace to help in every time of need.* I mean not, O Lord God, to turn thy grace into wantonneſs or perverſeneſs, or to make my weakneſs an excuſe for my negligence and ſloth. I confeſs thou haſt already given me more ſtrength than I have uſed; and I charge it upon myſelf, and not on thee, that I have not long ſince received ſtill more abundant ſupplies. I deſire for the future to be found diligent in the uſe of all appointed means; in the neglect of which, I well know, that petitions like theſe would be a profane mockery, and might much more probably provoke thee to take away what I have, than prevail upon thee to impart more; but firmly reſolving to exert myſelf to the utmoſt, I earneſtly entreat the communications of thy grace, that I may be enabled to fulfil that reſolution.

Be ſurety, O Lord, unto thy ſervant for good. Be pleaſed to ſhed abroad thy ſanctifying influences on my ſoul, to form me for every duty thou requireſt! Implant, I beſeech thee, every grace and virtue deep in mine heart; and maintain the happy temper in the midſt of thoſe aſſaults from within and from without, to which I am continually liable while I am in this world, and carry about with me ſo many infirmities! Fill my breaſt, I beſeech thee, with good affections towards thee, my

God, and towards my fellow-creatures! Remind me always of thy preſence: and may I remember, that every ſecret ſentiment of my ſoul is open to thee! May I, therefore, guard againſt the firſt riſings of ſin, and the firſt approaches to it! that Satan may not find room for his evil ſuggeſtions. I earneſtly beg that thou, Lord, wouldſt fill my heart by thine Holy Spirit, and take up thy reſidence there! *Dwell in me, and walk with me;* and let my body be the temple of the Holy Ghoſt!

May I be ſo *joined to Chriſt Jeſus my Lord, as to be one ſpirit with him*, and feel his invigorating influences continually bearing me on, ſuperior to every temptation, and to every corruption! That while the *youths ſhall faint and be weary, and the young men utterly fall, I may ſo wait upon the Lord as to renew my ſtrength; and may go on from one degree of faith, and love, and zeal, and holineſs, to another, till I appear perfect before thee in Zion*, to drink in immortal vigour and joy from thee, as the everlaſting fountain of both, *through Jeſus Chriſt my Lord, in whom I have righteouſneſs and ſtrength*, and to whom I deſire ever to aſcribe the praiſe of all mine improvements in both!—*Amen.*

CHAP. XVI.

The Chriſtian Convert warned of and animated againſt thoſe Diſcouragements which he muſt expect to meet with, when entering on a religious Courſe.

Christ has instructed his disciples to expect opposition and difficulties in the way to heaven, 1. Therefore [I.] A more particular view of them is taken, as arising, (1) From the remainders of indwelling sin, 2. (2) From the world, and especially from former sinful companions, 3. (3.) From the temptations and suggestions of Satan, 4. [II.] The Christian is animated and encouraged by various considerations to oppose them; particularly, by the presence of God, the aids of Christ, the example of others, who, though feeble, have conquered and the crown of glory to be expected, 5, 6 Therefore, though apostasy would be infinitely fatal, the Christian may press on cheerfully, 7. Accordingly the soul, alarmed by these views, is represented as committing itself to God, in the prayer which concludes the chapter.

1. WITH the utmoſt propriety has our Divine Maſter required us to *ſtrive to enter in at the ſtrait gate*; thereby intimating not only that the paſſage is narrow,

but that it is beſet with enemies; beſet, on the right hand and on the left, with enemies cunning and formidable. And be aſſured, O reader, that whatever your circumſtances in life are, you muſt meet and encounter them. It will, therefore, be your prudence to ſurvey them attentively in your own reflections, that you may ſee what you are to expect; and may conſider in what armour it is neceſſary you ſhould be clothed, and with what weapons you muſt be furniſhed to manage the combat. You have often heard them marſhalled, as it were, under three great leaders, the fleſh, the world, and the devil; and according to this diſtribution, I would call you to conſider the forces of each, as ſetting themſelves in array againſt you. O that you may be excited to *take to yourſelf the whole armour of God*, and to *quit yourſelf like a man* and a Chriſtian!

2. Let your conſcience anſwer whether you do not carry about with you a corrupt and a degenerate nature? You will, I doubt not, feel its effects. You will feel, in the language of the Apoſtle (who ſpeaks of it as the caſe of Chriſtians themſelves) *the fleſh luſting againſt the Spirit, ſo that you will not be able*, in all inſtances, *to do the things that you would*. You brought irregular propenſities into the world along with you; and you have ſo often indulged thoſe ſinful inclinations, that you have greatly increaſed their ſtrength; and you will find, in conſequence of it, that theſe habits cannot be broken through without great difficulty. You will, no doubt, often recollect the ſtrong figures by which the prophet deſcribes a caſe like yours; and you will own that it is juſtly repreſented by that *of an Ethiopian changing his ſkin, and the leopard his ſpots*. It is indeed poſſible, that at firſt you may find ſuch an edge and eagerneſs upon your own ſpirits, as may lead you to imagine, that all oppoſition will immediately fall before you; but, alas! I fear that in a little time theſe enemies, which ſeemed to be ſlain at your feet, will revive and recover their weapons, and renew the aſſault in one form or another. And perhaps your moſt painful combats may be with ſuch as you had thought moſt eaſy to be vanquiſhed; and your greateſt danger may ariſe from ſome of thoſe enemies from whom you apprehended the leaſt; particularly from pride, and from indolence of ſpirit; from a ſecret alienation of heart from God, and

from an indiſpoſition for converſing with him, through an immoderate attachment to things ſeen and temporal, which may be oftentimes exceedingly dangerous to your ſalvation, though perhaps they be not abſolutely and univerſally prohibited. In a thouſand ſuch inſtances you muſt learn to deny yourſelf, or you cannot be Chriſt's diſciple.

3. You muſt alſo lay your account to find great difficulties from the world; from its manners, cuſtoms and examples. The things of the world will hinder you one way, and the men of the world another. Perhaps you may meet with much leſs aſſiſtance in religion than you are now ready to expect from good men. The preſent generation of them is generally ſo cautious to avoid every thing that looks like oſtentation, and there ſeems ſomething ſo inſupportably dreadful in the charge of enthuſiaſm, that you will find moſt of our Chriſtian brethren ſtudying to conceal their virtue and their piety much more than others ſtudy to conceal their vices and their profaneneſs. But while, unleſs your ſituation be ſingularly happy, you meet with very little aid one way, you will, no doubt, find great oppoſition another. The enemies of religion will be bold and active in their aſſaults, while many of its friends ſeem unconcerned; and one ſinner will probably exert himſelf more to corrupt you, than ten Chriſtians to ſecure and ſave you.—They who have once been your companions in ſin, will try a thouſand artful methods to allure you back again to their forſaken ſociety; ſome of them perhaps with an appearance of tender fondneſs; and many more by the almoſt irreſiſtible art of banter and ridicule; that boaſted teſt of right and wrong, as it has been wantonly called, will be tried upon you, perhaps without any regard to decency, or even to common humanity. You will be derided and inſulted by thoſe whoſe eſteem and affection you naturally deſire; and may find much more propriety than you imagine in the expreſſion of the Apoſtle, *The trial of cruel mockings*, which ſome fear more than either ſword or flames. This perſecution of the tongue you muſt expect to go through, and perhaps may be branded as a lunatic, for no other cauſe than that you now begin to exerciſe your reaſon to purpoſe, and will not join with thoſe that are deſtroying their own ſouls in their wild career of folly and madneſs.

4. And it is not at all improbable, that, in the mean time, Satan may be doing his utmoſt to diſcourage and diſtreſs you. He will, no doubt, raiſe in your imagination the moſt tempting idea of the gratifications, the indulgencies and the companions you are obliged to forſake; and give you the moſt diſcouraging and terrifying view of the difficulties, ſeverities and dangers, which are (as he will perſuade you) inſeparable from religion. He will not fail to repreſent God himſelf, the fountain of goodneſs and happineſs, as an hard maſter, whom it is impoſſible to pleaſe. He will perhaps fill you with the moſt diſtreſsful fears, and, with cruel and inſolent malice, glory over you as his ſlave, when he knows you are the Lord's free man. At one time he will ſtudy, by his vile ſuggeſtions, to interrupt you in your duties, as if they gave him an additional power over you; at another time he will endeavour to weary you of your devotion, by influencing you to prolong it to an immoderate and tedious length, leſt his power ſhould be exerted upon you when it ceaſes. In ſhort, this practiſed deceiver has artifices, which it would require whole volumes to diſplay, with particular cautions againſt each. —And he will follow you with malicious arts and purſuits to the very end of your pilgrimage; and will leave no method unattempted which may be likely to weaken your hands, and to ſadden your heart; that if, through the gracious interpoſition of God, he cannot prevent your final happineſs, he may at leaſt impair your peace and your uſefulneſs as you are paſſing to it.

5. This is what the people of God feel; and what you feel in ſome degree or other, if you have your lot and your portion among them. But, after all, be not diſcouraged; Chriſt is *the Captain of your ſalvation.* It is delightful to conſider him under this view. When we take a ſurvey of theſe hoſts of enemies, we may lift up our head amidſt them all, and ſay, *More and greater is he that is with us, than all thoſe that are againſt us. Truſt in the Lord, and you will be like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abideth forever.* When your enemies preſs upon you, remember you are to fight in the preſence of God. Endeavour therefore to act a gallant and reſolute part; endeavour to *reſiſt them ſteadfaſtly in the faith.* Remember *he can give power to the faint, and increaſe ſtrength to them who have no*

might. He hath done it in ten thousand instances already; and he will do it in ten thousand more. How many striplings have conquered their gigantic foes in all their most formidable armour, when they have gone forth against them, though but *with a staff and a sling, in the name of the Lord God of Israel*. How many women and children have trodden down the force of the enemy, and *out of weakness have been made strong*.

6. Amidst all the opposition of earth and hell, look upward, and look forward, and you will feel your heart animated by the view. Your General is near; he is near to aid you; he is near to reward you. When you feel the temptation press the hardest, think of him who endured even the cross itself for your rescue. View the fortitude of your Divine Leader, and endeavour to march on in his steps. Hearken to his voice, for he proclaims it aloud, *Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life*. And O, how bright will it shine! and how long will its lustre last! When the gems that adorn the crowns of monarchs, and passing (instructive thought) from one royal head to another through succeeding centuries, are melted down in the last flame, it is *a crown of glory which fadeth not away*.

7. It is indeed true, that *such as turn aside to crooked paths, will be led forth with the workers of iniquity*, to that terrible execution, which the divine justice is preparing for them; and that it would have been *better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after having known it, to turn aside from the holy commandment*. But I would, by divine grace, *hope better things of you*. And I make it my hearty prayer for you, my reader, that you may be *kept by the power of God*, kept as in a garrison, on all sides fortified in the securest manner, *through faith unto salvation*.

The Soul, alarmed by a Sense of these Difficulties, committing itself to a Divine Protection.

BLESSED GOD, it is to thine almighty power that I flee. Behold me surrounded with difficulties and dangers, and stretch out thine omnipotent arm to save me, *O thou that savest*

by thy right hand them that put their truſt in thee, from thoſe that riſe up againſt them! This day do I ſolemnly put myſelf under thy protection; exert thy power in my favour, and permit me to *make the ſhadow of thy wings my refuge!* Let thy grace be ſufficient for me, and thy ſtrength *be made perfect in my weakneſs!* I dare not ſay, *I will never forſake thee*; *I will never deny thee:* but I hope I can truly ſay, O Lord, I would not do it; and that, according to my preſent apprehenſion and purpoſe, death would appear to me much leſs terrible than in any wilful and deliberate inſtance to offend thee. O root out thoſe corruptions from my heart, which in an hour of preſſing temptation, might incline me to view things in a different light, and ſo might betray me into the hand of the enemy! Strengthen my faith, O Lord, and encourage my hope! Inſpire me with an heroic reſolution in oppoſing every thing that lies in my way to heaven; and let me *ſet my face like a flint* againſt all the aſſaults of earth and hell. *If ſinners entice me*, let me *not conſent*; if they inſult me, let me not regard it; if they threaten me, let me not fear! Rather may a holy and ardent, yet prudent and well governed zeal, take occaſion, from that malignity of heart which they diſcover, to attempt their conviction and reformation! At leaſt, let me never be aſhamed to plead thy cauſe againſt the moſt profane deriders of religion! Make me to hear joy and gladneſs in my ſoul; and I will endeavour to *teach tranſgreſſors thy ways, that ſinners may be converted unto thee!* Yea, Lord, while my tears continue, though I ſhould apprehend myſelf condemned, I am condemned ſo righteouſly for my own folly, that I would be thine advocate, though againſt myſelf.

Keep me, O Lord, now, and at all times! Never let me think, whatever age or ſtation I attain, that I am ſtrong enough to maintain the combat without thee! nor let me imagine myſelf, even in this infancy of religion in my ſoul, ſo weak, that thou canſt not ſupport me! Wherever thou leadeſt me, there let me follow; and whatever ſtation thou appointeſt me, there let me labour, there let me maintain the holy war againſt all the enemies of my ſalvation, and rather fall in it than baſely abandon it!

And thou, O glorious Redeemer, the *Captain of my ſalvation*, the great *author and finiſher of my faith*, when I am in danger of denying thee as Peter did, look upon me with that mixture of majeſty and tenderneſs, which may either ſecure me from falling, or may ſpeedily recover me to God and my duty again! And teach me to take occaſion, even from my miſcarriages, to humble myſelf more deeply for all that has been amiſs, and to redouble my future diligence and caution.—*Amen.*

CHAP. XVII.

The Chriſtian urged to, and aſſiſted in, an expreſs Act of Self-Dedication to the Service of God.

The advantages of such a surrender are briefly suggested, 1. Advices for the manner of doing it; that it may be deliberate, cheerful, entire, and perpetual, 2—and that it be expressed with some affecting solemnity, 5. A written instrument to be signed and declared before God at some season of extraordinary devotion, proposed, 6, 7. The chapter concludes with a specimen of such an instrument, together with an abstract of it, to be used with proper and requisite alterations.

1. As I would hope that, notwithſtanding all the views of oppoſition which do or may ariſe, yet in conſideration of thoſe noble ſupports and motives which have been mentioned in the two preceding chapters, you are heartily determined for the ſervice of God, I would now urge you to make a ſolemn ſurrender of yourſelf unto it. Do not only form ſuch a purpoſe in your heart, but expreſsly declare it in the divine preſence. Such ſolemnity in the manner of doing it is certainly very reaſonable in the nature of things; and ſurely it is highly expedient, for binding to the Lord ſuch a treacherous heart as we know our own to be. It will be pleaſant to reflect upon it, as done at ſuch and ſuch a time, with ſuch and ſuch circumſtances of place and method, which may ſerve to ſtrike the memory and the conſcience. The ſenſe of the vows of God which are upon you, will ſtrengthen you in an hour of temptation; and the recollection may alſo encourage your humble boldneſs and freedom in applying to him, under the character and relation of *your covenant God and Father*, as future exigencies may require.

2. Do it, therefore, but do it deliberately. Conſider what it is you are to do; and conſider how reaſonable it is that it ſhould be done, and done cordially and cheerfully; *not by conſtraint, but willingly*: for, in this ſenſe and in every other, *God loves a cheerful giver*. Now ſurely there is nothing we ſhould do with greater cheerfulneſs, or more cordial conſent, than making ſuch a ſurrender of ourſelves to the Lord; to the God who created, who brought us into this

pleasant and well finished world, who supported us in our tender infancy, who guarded us in the thoughtless days of childhood and youth, who has hitherto continually helped, sustained, and preserved us. Nothing can be more reasonable, than that we should acknowledge him as our rightful Owner and our sovereign Ruler; than that we should devote ourselves to him as our most gracious Benefactor, and seek him as our supreme felicity. Nothing can be more apparently equitable, than that we, the product of his power, and the price of his Son's blood, should be his, and his forever. If you see the matter in its just view, it will be the grief of your soul that you have ever alienated yourself from the blessed God and his service; so far will you be from wishing to continue in that state of alienation another year, or another day. You will rejoice to bring back to him his revolted creature; and as you have in times past *yielded your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin*, you will delight to yield yourselves unto God, *as alive from the dead* and to employ *your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.*

3. The surrender will also be as entire as it is cheerful and immediate. All you are, and all you have, and all you can do, your time, your possessions, your influence over others, will be devoted to him, that for the future it may be employed entirely for him and to his glory. You will desire to keep back nothing from him; but will seriously judge that you are then in the truest and noblest sense your own, when you are most entirely his. You are also, on this great occasion, to resign all that you have to the disposal of his wise and gracious providence, not only owning his power, but consenting to his undoubted right to do what he pleases with you, and all that he has given you, and declaring a hearty approbation of all that he has done, and of all that he may farther do.

4. Once more, let me remind you, that this surrender must be perpetual. You must give yourself up to God in such a manner, as never more to pretend to be your own; for the rights of God are, like his nature, eternal and immutable; and with regard to his rational creatures, are *the same yesterday, to day, and forever.*

5. I would further advise and urge, that this dedication may be made with all possible solemnity. Do it in express

words. And perhaps it may be in many cases most expedient, as many pious divines have recommended, to do it in writing. Set your hand and seal to it,—That on such a day of such a month and year, and at such a place, on full consideration and serious reflection, you came to this happy resolution, *that whatever others might do, you would serve the Lord.*

6. Such an instrument you may, if you please, draw up for yourself; or if you rather choose to have it drawn up to your hand, you may find something of this nature below, in which you may easily make such alterations as shall suit your circumstances where there is any thing peculiar in them. But whatever you use, weigh it well, meditate attentively upon it, that you may *not be rash with your mouth to utter any thing before God.* And when you determine to execute this instrument, let this transaction be attended with some more than ordinary religious retirement. Make it, if you conveniently can, a day of secret fasting and prayer; and when your heart is prepared with a becoming awe of the Divine Majesty, with an humble confidence in his goodness, and an earnest desire of his favour, then present yourself on your knees before God, and read it over deliberately and solemnly; and when you have signed it, lay it by in some secure place, where you may review it whenever you please; and make it a rule with yourself to review it, if possible, at certain seasons of the year, that you may keep the remembrance of it.

7. At least, take this course till you see your way clear to the table of the Lord, where you are to renew the same covenant, and to seal it with more affecting solemnities. And God grant that you may be enabled to keep it, and in the whole of your conversation, to walk according to it! May it be an anchor to your soul in every temptation, and a cordial to it in every affliction! May the recollection of it embolden your addresses to the throne of grace now, and give additional strength to your departing spirit, in a consciousness that it is ascending to your covenant God and Father, and to that gracious Redeemer, whose power and faithfulness will securely *keep what you commit to him until that day.*

An Example of Self-Dedication; or, A ſolemn Form of renewing our Covenant with God.

ETERNAL and unchangeable Jehovah, thou great Creator of heaven and earth, and adorable Lord of angels and men! I deſire with the deepeſt humiliation and abaſement of ſoul, to fall down at this time in thine awful preſence, and earneſtly pray that thou wilt penetrate my very heart with a ſuitable ſenſe of thine unutterable and inconceivable glories!

"Trembling *may juſtly take hold upon me*, when I, a ſinful worm, preſume to lift up my head to thee, preſume to appear in thy majeſtic preſence on ſuch an occaſion as this. *Who am I, O Lord God, or what is my houſe?* What is my nature and deſcent, my character, and deſert, that I ſhould ſpeak of this, and deſire that I may be one party in a covenant, where thou, *the King of kings, and Lord of lords*, art the other? I bluſh, and am confounded even to mention it before thee. But, O Lord, great as is thy majeſty, ſo alſo is thy mercy. If thou wilt hold converſe with any of thy creatures, thy ſuperlatively exalted nature muſt ſtoop, muſt ſtoop infinitely low. And I know that in and through Jeſus, the Son of thy love, thou condeſcendeſt to viſit ſinful mortals, and to allow their approach to thee, and their covenant intercourſe with thee; nay, I know that the ſcheme and plan is thine own; and that thou haſt graciouſly ſent to propoſe it to us; as none untaught by thee would have been able to form it, or inclined to embrace it, even when actually propoſed.

"To thee, therefore, do I now come, invited by the name of thy Son, and truſting in his righteouſneſs and grace. Laying myſelf at thy feet with ſhame and confuſion of face, and ſmiting upon my breaſt, I ſay, with the humble Publican, *God be merciful to me a ſinner!* I acknowledge, O Lord, that I have been a great tranſgreſſor. *My ſins have reached unto heaven, and mine iniquities are lifted up unto the ſkies.* The irregular propenſities of my corrupt, degenerate nature have, in ten thouſand aggravated inſtances, *wrought to bring forth fruit unto death.* And if thou ſhouldſt be ſtrict to mark mine offences, I muſt be ſilent under a load of guilt, and immediately ſink into

deſtruction. But thou haſt graciouſly called me to return unto thee, though I have been *a wandering ſheep, a prodigal ſon, a backſliding child.* Behold, therefore, O Lord, I come unto thee. I come convinced not only of my ſin, but of my folly. I come from my very heart aſhamed of myſelf, and with an acknowledgment, in the ſincerity and humility of my ſoul, that *I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly.* I am confounded myſelf at the remembrance of theſe things; but be thou *merciful to my unrighteouſneſs, and do not remember againſt me my ſins and my tranſgreſſions.* Permit me, O Lord, to bring back unto thee thoſe powers and faculties which I have ungratefully and ſacrilegiouſly alienated from thy ſervice; and receive, I beſeech thee, thy poor revolted creature, who is now convinced of thy right to him, and deſires nothing in the whole world ſo much as to be thine!

Bleſſed God, it is with the utmoſt ſolemnity that I make this ſurrender of myſelf unto thee. *Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; I avouch the Lord this day to be my God;* and I avouch and declare myſelf this day to be *one of his covenant children and people.* Hear, O thou God of heaven, and record it in *the book of thy remembrance*, that henceforth I am thine, entirely thine. I would not merely conſecrate unto thee ſome of my powers, or ſome of my poſſeſſions; or give thee a certain proportion of my ſervices, or all I am capable of for a limited time; but I would be wholly thine, and thine forever. From this day do I ſolemnly renounce all the *former lords which have had dominion over me;* every ſin, and every luſt; and bid in thy name, an eternal defiance to the powers of hell, which have moſt unjuſtly uſurped the empire over my ſoul, and to all the corruptions which their fatal temptations have introduced into it. The whole frame of my nature, all the faculties of my mind, and all the members of my body, would I preſent before thee this day, *as a living ſacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which I know to be my moſt reaſonable ſervice.* To thee I conſecrate all my worldly poſſeſſions; in thy ſervice I deſire to ſpend all the remainder of my time upon earth, and beg thou wouldſt inſtruct and influence me, ſo that whether my abode here be longer or ſhorter, every year and month, every day and hour may be uſed in ſuch a manner, as ſhall moſt effectually promote thine honour,

and ſubſerve the ſchemes of thy wiſe and gracious providence. And I earneſtly pray, that whatever influence thou giveſt me over others, in any of the ſuperior relations of life in which I may ſtand, or in the conſequence of any peculiar regard which may be paid to me, thou wouldſt give me ſtrength and courage to exert myſelf to the utmoſt for thy glory; reſolving, not only that I will myſelf do it, but that all others, ſo far as I can rationally and properly influence them, *ſhall ſerve the Lord.* In this courſe, O bleſſed God, would I ſteadfaſtly perſevere to the very end of my life; earneſtly praying, that every future day of it may ſupply the deficiencies, and correct the irregularities of the former; and that I may by divine grace be enabled, not only to hold on in that happy way, but daily to grow more active in it!

"Nor do I only conſecrate all that I am, and have, to thy ſervice, but I alſo moſt humbly reſign and ſubmit to thine holy and ſovereign will, myſelf, and all that I can call mine. I leave, O Lord, to thy management and direction, all I poſſeſs and all I wiſh; and ſet every enjoyment and every intereſt before thee, to be diſpoſed of as thou pleaſeſt. Continue or remove what thou haſt given me; beſtow or refuſe what I imagine I want, as thou, Lord, ſhalt ſee good! And though I dare not ſay I will never repine, yet I hope I may venture to ſay that I will labour, not only to ſubmit, but to acquieſce; not only to bear what thou doeſt in thy moſt afflictive diſpenſations, but to conſent to it, and to praiſe thee for it; contentedly reſolving, in all that thou appointeſt for me, my will into thine, and looking on myſelf as nothing, and on thee, O God, as the great eternal All, whoſe word ought to determine every thing, and whoſe government ought to be the joy of the whole rational creation.

"Uſe me, O Lord, I beſeech thee, as the inſtrument of thy glory, and honour me ſo far as, either by doing or ſuffering what thou ſhalt appoint, to bring ſome revenue of praiſe to thee, and of benefit to the world in which I dwell! And may it pleaſe thee, from this day forward, to number me among *thy peculiar people, that I may no more be a ſtranger and foreigner, but a fellow-citizen with the ſaints, and of the houſehold of God!* Receive, O heavenly Father, thy returning prodigal! Waſh me in the blood of thy dear

Son; clothe me with his perfect righteousness; and sanctify me throughout by the power of thy Spirit! Destroy, I beseech thee, more and more, the power of sin in mine heart! Transform me more into thine own image, and fashion me to the resemblance of Jesus, whom henceforward I would acknowledge as my teacher and sacrifice; my intercessor and my Lord! Communicate to me, I beseech thee, all needful influences of thy purifying, thy cheering, and thy comforting Spirit; and *lift up that light of thy countenance upon me*, which will put the sublimest *joy and gladness into my soul.*

"Dispose my affairs, O God, in a manner which may be most subservient to thy glory, and my own truest happiness; and when I have done and borne thy will upon earth, call me from hence at what time and in what manner thou pleasest; only grant that in my dying moments, and in the near prospect of eternity, I may remember these my engagements to thee, and may employ my latest breath in thy service! And do thou, Lord, when thou seest the agonies of dissolving nature upon me, remember this covenant too, even though I should then be incapable of recollecting it! Look down, O my heavenly Father, with a pitying eye, upon thy languishing, thy dying child; place thine everlasting arms under me for my support; put strength and confidence into my departing spirit; and receive it to the embraces of thine everlasting love! Welcome it to the abodes *of them that sleep in Jesus*, to wait with them that glorious day, when the last of thy promises to thy covenant people shall be fulfilled in their triumphant resurrection, and that *abundant entrance*, which shall be *administered to them* into that *everlasting kingdom*, of which thou hast assured them by thy covenant, and in the hope of which I now lay hold on it, desiring to live and die as with mine hand on that hope.

"And when I am thus numbered among the dead, and all the interests of mortality are over with me forever, if this solemn memorial should chance to fall into the hands of any surviving friends, may it be the means of making serious impressions on their minds! May they read it, not only as my language, but as their own; and learn to *fear the Lord my God*, and with me *to put their trust under the*

ſhadow of his wings for time and for eternity! And may they alſo learn to adore with me that grace, which inclines our hearts to enter into the covenant, and condeſcends to admit us into it when ſo inclined; aſcribing with me, and with all the nations of the redeemed, to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghoſt, that glory, honour, and praiſe, which is ſo juſtly due to each Divine Perſon for the part he bears in this illuſtrious work!—*Amen.*"

N. B. For the ſake of thoſe who may think the preceding form of ſelf-dedication too long to be transcribed, as it is probable many will, I have, at the deſire of a much eſteemed friend, added the following abridgment of it, which ſhould by all means be attentively weighed in every clauſe before it be executed; and any word or phraſe which may ſeem liable to exception, changed, that the whole heart may conſent to it.

"ETERNAL and ever-bleſſed God! I deſire to preſent myſelf before thee with the deepeſt humiliation and abaſement of ſoul; ſenſible how unworthy ſuch a ſinful worm is to appear before the holy Majeſty of heaven, *the King of kings and Lord of lords*, and eſpecially on ſuch an occaſion as this, even to enter into a covenant tranſaction with thee. But the ſcheme and plan is thine own. Thine infinite condeſcenſion hath offered it by thy Son, and thy grace hath inclined my heart to accept of it.

"I come, therefore, acknowledging myſelf to have been a great offender; ſmiting on my breaſt, and ſaying with the humble Publican, *God be merciful to me a ſinner!* I come invited by the name of thy Son, and wholly truſting in his perfect righteouſneſs; entreating that, for his ſake, thou wilt be merciful to my unrighteouſneſs, and wilt no more remember my ſins. Receive, I beſeech thee, thy revolted creature, who is now convinced of thy right to him, and deſires nothing ſo much as that he may be thine!

"This day do I, with the utmoſt ſolemnity, ſurrender myſelf to thee. I renounce all *former lords that have had dominion over me;* and I conſecrate to thee all that I am, and all that I have; the faculties of my mind, the members of my body, my worldly poſſeſſions, my time, and my influence over others; to be all uſed entirely for thy glory, and reſolutely employed in obedience to thy commands, as long as thou continueſt me in life; with an ardent deſire and humble reſolution to continue thine through

all the endleſs ages of eternity; ever holding myſelf in an attentive poſture to obſerve the firſt intimations of thy will, and ready to ſpring forward, with zeal and joy, to the immediate execution of it!

"To thy direction alſo I reſign myſelf, and all I am and have, to be diſpoſed of by thee in ſuch a manner as thou ſhalt in thine infinite wiſdom judge moſt ſubſervient to the purpoſes of thy glory. To thee I leave the management of all events, and ſay without reſerve, *Not my will, but thine be done!* rejoicing with a loyal heart in thine unlimited government, as what ought to be the delight of the whole rational creation.

"Uſe me, O Lord, I beſeech thee, as an inſtrument of thy ſervice! Number me among thy peculiar people! Let me be waſhed in the blood of thy dear Son! Let me be clothed with his righteouſneſs! Let me be ſanctified by his Spirit! Transform me more and more into his image! Impart to me, through him, all needful influences of thy purifying, cheering, and comforting Spirit! And let my life be ſpent under thoſe influences, and in the light of thy gracious countenance, as my Father and my God! *And when the ſolemn hour of death comes, may I remember this thy covenant, well ordered in all things, and ſure, as all my ſalvation and all my deſire,* though every other hope and enjoyment is periſhing! And do thou, O Lord, remember it too! Look down with pity, O my heavenly Father, on thy languiſhing, dying child! Embrace me in thine everlaſting arms! Put ſtrength and confidence into my departing ſpirit! and receive it to the abodes of them that ſleep in Jeſus, peacefully and joyfully to wait the accompliſhment of thy great promiſe to all thy people, even that of a glorious reſurrection, and of eternal happineſs in thine heavenly preſence! And if any ſurviving friend ſhould, when I am in the duſt, meet with this memorial of my ſolemn tranſactions with thee, may he make the engagement his own; and do thou graciouſly permit him to partake in all the bleſſings of thy covenant, through Jeſus, the great Mediator of it; to whom, with thee, O Father, and the Holy Spirit, be everlaſting praiſes aſcribed, by all the millions who are thus ſaved by thee, and by all thoſe other celeſtial ſpirits, in whoſe work and bleſſedneſs thou ſhalt call them to ſhare! *Amen.*

CHAP. XVIII.

Of entering into Church Communion by an Attendance upon the Lord's Supper.

The reader, being already supposed to have entered into covenant with God, 1. is urged publickly to seal that engagement at the table of the Lord, 2. (1.) From a view of the ends for which that ordinance was instituted, 3. whence its usefulness is strongly inferred, 4. And, (2.) From the authority of Christ's appointment; which is solemnly pressed on the conscience, 5. Objections from apprehensions of an unfitness, 6. weakness of grace, &c. briefly answered, 7. Serious thoughts on this subject is absolutely insisted upon, 8. The chapter is closed with a prayer for one who desires to attend, yet finds himself pressed with remaining doubts.

1. I HOPE this chapter will find you, by a most express consent, become one of God's covenant people, solemnly and cordially devoted to his service; and it is my hearty prayer, that the covenant you have made on earth, may be ratified in heaven. But for your farther instruction and edification, give me leave to remind you, that our Lord Jesus Christ hath appointed a peculiar manner of expressing our regard to him, and of solemnly renewing his covenant with him, which, though it does not forbid any other proper way of doing it, must by no means be set aside or neglected for any human methods, how prudent and expedient soever they may appear to us.

2. Our Lord has wisely ordained, that the advantages of society should be brought into religion; and as, by his command, professing Christians assemble together for other acts of publick worship, so he has been pleased to institute a social ordinance, in which a whole assembly of them is to come to his table, and there to eat the same bread and drink the same cup. And this they are to do as a token of their affectionate remembrance of his dying love, of their solemn surrender of themselves to God, and of their sincere love to one another, and to all their fellow Christians.

3. That these are indeed the great ends of the Lord's Supper, I shall not now stay to argue at large. You need only read what the apostle Paul has written in the tenth and eleventh chapters of his first epistle to the Corinthians, to convince you fully of this. He there expressly tells us,

that our Lord commanded the bread to be eaten, and the wine to be drank in remembrance of him, or as a commemoration or memorial of him; ſo that, as often as we attend this inſtitution, we ſhow forth our Lord's death, which we are to do even until he come again. And it is particularly aſſerted, that the cup is the New Teſtament in his blood; that is, it is a ſeal of that covenant which was ratified by his blood. Now, it is evident that, in conſequence of this, we are to approach it with a view to that covenant, deſiring its bleſſings, and reſolving by divine grace, to comply with its demands. On the whole, therefore, as the Apoſtle ſpeaks, we have communion in the body and blood of Chriſt; and partaking of his table, and of his cup, we converſe with Chriſt, and join ourſelves to him as his people; as the Heathens had, in their idolatrous rites, communion with their deities, and joined themſelves to them; and the Jews, by eating their ſacrifices, converſed with Jehovah, and joined themſelves to him. He farther reminds them, that though many, they were *one bread and one body, being all partakers of that one bread*, and being *all made to drink into one ſpirit*; that is, meeting together as they were but one family, and joining in the commemoration of that one blood, which was their common ranſom, and of the Lord Jeſus, their common head. Now, it is evident, all theſe reaſonings are applicable to Chriſtians in ſucceeding ages. Permit me, therefore, by the authority of our Divine Maſter, to preſs upon you the obſervation of this precept.

4. And let me alſo urge it from the apparent tendency which it has to promote your trueſt advantage. You are ſetting out in the Chriſtian life; and I have reminded you at large of the oppoſition you muſt expect to meet with in it. It is the love of Chriſt which muſt animate you to break through all. What then can be more deſirable than to bear about with you a lively ſenſe of it? And what can awaken that ſenſe more than the contemplation of his death as there repreſented? Who can behold the bread broken, and the wine poured out, and not reflect how the body of the bleſſed Jeſus was even torn in pieces by his ſufferings, and his ſacred blood poured forth like water on the ground? Who can think of the heart-rending agonies of the Son of God, as the price of our redemption and ſalvation, and not feel his ſoul melted with tenderneſs, and inflamed with

grateful affection? What an exalted view doth it give us of the bleſſings of the goſpel covenant, when we conſider it as *eſtabliſhed in the blood of God's only begotten Son!* And when we make our approach to God, as our heavenly Father, and give up ourſelves to his ſervice in this ſolemn manner, what an awful tendency has it to fix the conviction, that *we are not our own, being bought with ſuch a price!* What a tendency has it to guard againſt every temptation to thoſe ſins which we have ſo ſolemnly renounced, and to engage our fidelity to him to whom we have *bound our ſouls as with an oath!* Well may *our hearts be knit together in mutual love*, when *we conſider ourſelves as one in Chriſt*; his blood becomes the cement of the ſociety, joins us in ſpirit, not only to each other, but *to all that in every place call on the name of Jeſus Chriſt our Lord, both theirs and ours*; and we anticipate, in pleaſing hope, that bleſſed day, when the aſſembly ſhall be complete, and we ſhall all *be forever with the Lord.* Well may theſe views engage us to *deny ourſelves, and take up our croſs, and follow our crucified Maſter*; well may they engage us to do our utmoſt by prayer, and all other ſuitable endeavours, to ſerve his followers and his friends; to ſerve thoſe whom he hath purchaſed with his blood, and who are to be his aſſociates and ours in the glories of an happy immortality.

5. It is alſo the expreſs inſtitution and command of our bleſſed Redeemer, that the members of ſuch ſocieties ſhould be tenderly ſolicitous for the ſpiritual welfare of each other; and that, on the whole, his churches may be kept pure and holy, that they ſhould *withdraw themſelves from every brother that walketh diſorderly*; that they ſhould *mark ſuch as cauſe offences or ſcandals amongſt them, contrary to the doctrine which they have learned, and avoid them*; that if any obey not the word of Chriſt by his apoſtles, they ſhould have no fellowſhip or communion with ſuch, that they may be aſhamed; that they ſhould not eat with ſuch as are notoriouſly irregular in their behaviour; but, on the contrary, ſhould put away from among themſelves ſuch wicked perſons. It is evident, therefore, that the inſtitution of ſuch ſocieties is greatly for the honour of Chriſtianity, and for the advantage of its particular profeſſors, and conſequently every conſideration of obedience to our common Lord, and of prudent regard to our own benefit, and that of our

brethren, will require that thoſe who love the Lord Jeſus Chriſt in ſincerity, ſhould enter into them, and aſſemble among them, in theſe their moſt ſolemn and peculiar acts of communion at his table.

6. I entreat you, therefore, and, if I may preſume to ſay it, in his name, and by his authority, I charge it on your conſcience, that this precept of our dying Lord go not, as it were, for naught with you; but that, if you indeed love him, you keep this as well as the reſt of his commandments. I know you may be ready to form objections. I have elſewhere debated many of the chief of them at large, and I hope not without ſome good effect. The great queſtion is that which relates to your being prepared for a worthy attendance; and in conjunction with what hath been ſaid before, I think that may be brought to a very ſhort iſſue. Have you, ſo far as you know your own heart, been ſincere in that deliberate ſurrender of yourſelf to God through Chriſt, which I recommended in the former chapter? If you have (whether it were with or without the particular form or manner of doing it there recommended) you have certainly taken hold of the covenant, and therefore have a right to the ſeal of it. And there is not, and cannot be, any other view of the ordinance in which you can have any further objection to it. If you deſire to remember Chriſt's death, if you deſire to renew the dedication of yourſelf to God through him, if you would enrol yourſelf among his people, if you would love them, and do them good according to your ability; and, on the whole, would not allow yourſelf in the practice of any one known ſin, or in the omiſſion of any one known duty, then I will venture confidently to ſay, not only that you will be welcome to the ordinance, but that it was inſtituted for ſuch as you.

7. As for other objections, a few words might ſuffice, by way of reply. The weakneſs of the religious principle in your ſoul, if it be really implanted there, is ſo far from being an argument againſt your ſeeking ſuch a method to ſtrengthen it, that it rather ſtrongly enforces the neceſſity of doing it. The neglect of this ſolemnity by ſo many that call themſelves Chriſtians, ſhould rather engage you ſo much the more to diſtinguiſh your zeal for an inſtitution, in this reſpect ſo much ſlighted and injured. And as for the fears of aggravated guilt in caſe of apoſtaſy, do not indulge them.

This may, by the divine bleſſing, be an effectual remedy againſt the evil you fear; and, it is certain, that after what you muſt already have known and felt, before you could be brought into your preſent ſituation (on the ſuppoſitions I have now been making) there can be no room to think of a retreat; no room, even for the wretched hope of being leſs miſerable than the generality of thoſe that have periſhed. Your ſcheme, therefore, muſt be to make your ſalvation as ſure, and as glorious as poſſible; and I know not any appointment of our bleſſed Redeemer which may have a more comfortable aſpect upon that bleſſed end, than this which I am now recommending to you.

8. One thing I would at leaſt inſiſt upon, and I ſee not with what face it can be denied. I mean, that you ſhould take this matter into a ſerious conſideration; that you ſhould diligently inquire, whether you have reaſon in your conſcience to believe it is the will of God you ſhould now approach to the ordinance, or not; and that you ſhould continue your reflections, your inquiries, and your prayers, till you find further encouragement to come, if that encouragement be hitherto wanting. For of this be aſſured, that a ſtate in which you are on the whole unfit to approach this ordinance, is a ſtate in which you are deſtitute of the neceſſary preparation for death and heaven; in which, therefore, if you would not allow yourſelves to ſlumber on the brink of deſtruction, you ought not to reſt ſo much as one ſingle day or night.

A Prayer for one who earneſtly deſires to approach to the Table of the Lord, yet has ſome remaining Doubts concerning his Right to that ſolemn Ordinance.

BLESSED LORD, I adore thy wiſe and gracious appointments for the edification of thy church in holineſs and in love. I thank thee that thou haſt commanded thy ſervants to form themſelves into ſocieties; and I adore my gracious Saviour, who hath inſtituted, as with his dying breath, the holy ſolemnity of his ſupper, to be, through all ages, a memorial of his dying love, and a bond of that union which it is his ſovereign pleaſure that his people ſhould preſerve. I hope thou, Lord, art witneſs to the ſincerity

with which I desire to give myself up to thee; and that I may call thee to record on my soul, that if I now hesitate about this particular manner of doing it, it is not because I would allow myself to break any of thy commands, or to slight any of thy favours. I trust thou knowest, that my present delay arises only from an uncertainty as to my own duty, and a fear of profaning holy things by an unworthy approach to them. Yet surely, O Lord, if thou hast given me a reverence for thy command, a desire of communion with thee, and a willingness to devote myself wholly to thy service, I may regard it as a token for good, that thou art disposed to receive me, and that I am not wholly unqualified for an ordinance, which I so highly honour, and so earnestly desire. I therefore make it mine humble request unto thee, O Lord, this day, that thou wouldst graciously be pleased to instruct me in my duty, and to *teach me the way which I should take! Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my reins and my heart!* Is there any secret sin, to the love and practice of which I would indulge? Is there any of thy precepts, in the habitual breach of which I would allow myself? I trust I can appeal to thee as a witness that there is not. Let me not then wrong mine own soul by a causeless and sinful absence from thy sacred table! But grant, O Lord, I beseech thee, that thy word, thy providence, and thy Spirit may so concur, as to make my way plain before me! Scatter my remaining doubts, if thou seest they have no just foundation! Fill me with a more assured faith, with a more ardent love; and plead thine own cause with my heart in such a manner, as that I may not be able any longer to delay that approach, which if I am thy servant indeed, is equally my duty and my privilege! In the mean time, grant that it may never be long out of my thoughts; but that I may give all diligence, if there be any remaining occasion of doubt, to remove it by a more affectionate concern to avoid whatever is displeasing to the eyes of thine holiness, and to practise the full extent of my duty! May the views of Christ crucified be so familiar to my mind, and may a sense of his dying love so powerfully constrain my soul, that my own growing experience may put it out of all question, that I am one of those for whom he intended this feast of love!

And even now, as joined to thy churches in spirit and in

love, though not in so expreſs and intimate a bond as I could wiſh, would I heartily pray, that thy *bleſſing may be on all thy people!* That thou *wouldſt feed thine heritage, and lift them up forever!* May every Chriſtian ſociety flouriſh in knowledge, in holineſs, and in love! May all *thy prieſts be clothed with ſalvation*, that by their means *thy choſen people may be made joyful;* and may there be a glorious acceſſion to thy churches every where, of thoſe who may *fly to them as a cloud, and as doves to their windows!* May *thy table*, O Lord, *be furniſhed with gueſts;* and may all that *love thy ſalvation ſay, Let the Lord be magnified, who hath pleaſure in the proſperity of his ſervants!* And I earneſtly pray, that all who profeſs to have received Chriſt Jeſus the Lord, may be duly careful to walk in him; and that we may all be preparing for the general aſſembly of the firſt-born, and may join in that nobler and immediate worſhip where all theſe types and ſhadows ſhall be laid aſide; where even theſe memorials ſhall be no longer neceſſary, but a living, preſent Redeemer, ſhall be the everlaſting joy of thoſe, who here in his abſence have delighted to commemorate his death!—*Amen.*

CHAP. XIX.

Some more particular Directions for maintaining continual Communion with God, or being in his Fear all the Day long.

A letter to a pious friend on this subject introduced here, 1. A general plan of directions, 2. [I.] For the beginning of the day, 3. (1.) Lifting up the heart to God at our first awaking, 4. (2.) Setting ourselves to the secret devotions of the morning; with respect to which, particular advices are given, 5—10. [II.] For the progress of the day, 11. Directions are given concerning, (1.) Seriousness in devotion, 12. (2.) Diligence in business, 13. (3.) Prudence in recreations, 14. (4.) Observation of providence, 15. (5.) Watchfulness against temptations, 16. (6.) Dependence on divine influences, 17. (7.) Government of the thoughts when in solitude, 18. (8.) Management of discourse in company, 19. [III.] For the conclusion of the day, 20. (1.) With the secret devotions of the evening, 21. Directions for self-examination, 22, 23. (2.) Lying down with a proper temper, 24. Conclusion of the letter, 25, and of the chapter, 26. With a serious view of death, proper to be taken at the close of the day.

1. I WOULD hope that, upon ſerious conſideration, ſelf-examination, and prayer, the reader may by this time

have come to a resolution to attend the table of the Lord, and to seal his vows there. I will now suppose that solemn transaction to be over, or some other deliberate act to have passed, by which he has given himself up to the service of God; and that his concern now is to inquire how he may act according to the vows of God which are upon him. Now, for his farther assistance here, besides the general view I have already given of the Christian temper and character, I will propose some more particular directions relating to maintaining that devout, spiritual, and heavenly character, which may, in the language of scripture, be called, *A daily walking with God; or, being in his fear all the day long.* And I know not how I can express the idea and plan which I have formed of this in a more clear and distinct manner than I did in a letter, which I wrote many years ago, to a young person of eminent piety, with whom I had then an intimate friendship; and who, to the great grief of all that knew him, died a few months after he received it. Yet I hope he lived long enough to reduce the directions into practice, which I wish and pray that every reader may do, so far as they may properly suit his capacities and circumstances in life, considering it as if addressed to himself. I say (and desire it may be observed) that I wish my reader may act on these directions, so far as they may properly suit his capacities and circumstances in life; for I would be far from laying down the following particulars as universal rules for all, or for any one person in the world at all times. Let them be practised by those that are able, and when they have leisure: and when you cannot reach them all, come as near the most important of them as you conveniently can. With this precaution I proceed to the letter, which I would hope, after this previous care to guard against the danger of mistaking it, will not discourage even the weakest Christian. Let us humbly and cheerfully do our best, and rejoice that we have so gracious a Father, who knows all our infirmities, and so compassionate an High-Priest, to recommend to divine acceptance the feeblest efforts of sincere duty and love!

My dear Friend,

SINCE you desire my thoughts in writing, and at large, on the subject of our late conversation, viz. "By what

particular methods, in our daily conduct, a life of devotion and usefulness may be most happily maintained and secured?' I set myself with cheerfulness to recollect and digest the hints which I then gave you, hoping it may be of some service to you in your most important interests, and may also fix on my own mind a deeper sense of my obligations to govern my own life by the rules I offer to others. I esteem attempts of this kind among the pleasantest fruits, and the surest cements of friendship; and, as I hope ours will last forever, I am persuaded a mutual care to cherish sentiments of this kind, will add everlasting endearments to it.

2. The directions you will expect from me on this occasion naturally divide themselves into three heads. How we are to regard God—in the beginning—the progress—and the close of the day. I will open my heart freely to you with regard to each, and will leave you to judge how far these hints may suit your circumstances; aiming at least to keep between the extremes of a superstitious strictness in trifles, and of an indolent remissness, which, if admitted in little things, may draw after it criminal neglects, and at length yet more criminal indulgencies.

3. [I.] In the begining of the day, it should certainly be our care to lift up our hearts to God as soon as we awake, and while we are rising, and then to set ourselves seriously and immediately to the secret devotions of the morning.

4. For the first of these, it seems exceedingly natural. There are so many things that may suggest a great variety of pious reflections and ejaculations, which are so obvious, that one would think a serious mind could hardly miss them. The ease and cheerfulness of our mind at our first awaking; the refreshment we find from sleep; the security we have enjoyed in that defenceless state; the provision of warm and decent apparel; the cheerful light of the returning sun; or (what is not unfit to mention to you) the contrivances of art, taught and furnished by the great Author of all our conveniencies, to supply us with many useful hours of life in the absence of the sun; the hope of returning to the dear society of our friends; the prospect of spending another day in the service of God, and the improvement of our own minds; and, above all, the lively hope of a joyful resurrection to an eternal day of happiness and glory. Any of these particulars, and many more,

which I do not mention, may furniſh us with matter of pleaſing reflection, and cheerful praiſe, while we are riſing. And for our farther aſſiſtance, when we are alone at this time, it may not be improper to ſpeak ſometimes to ourſelves, and ſometimes to our heavenly Father, in the natural expreſſions of joy and thankfulneſs. Permit me, Sir, to add, that if we find our hearts in ſuch a frame at our firſt awaking, even that is juſt matter of praiſe, and the rather, as perhaps it is an anſwer to the prayer with which we lay down.

5. For the exerciſe of ſecret devotion in a morning, which I hope will generally be our firſt work, I cannot preſcribe an exact method to another. You muſt, my dear friend, conſult your own taſte in ſome meaſure. The conſtituent parts of the ſervice are, in the general, plain. Were I to propoſe a particular model for thoſe who have half or three quarters of an hour at command (which, with prudent conduct, I ſuppoſe moſt may have) it ſhould be this:

6. To begin the ſtated devotions of the day with a ſolemn act of praiſe, offered to God on our knees, and generally with a low yet diſtinct voice, acknowledging the mercies we had been reflecting on while riſing; never forgetting to mention Chriſt as the great foundation of all our enjoyments and our hopes, or to return thanks for the influences of the bleſſed Spirit, which have led our hearts to God, or are then engaging us to ſeek him. This, as well as other offices of devotion afterwards mentioned, muſt be done attentively and ſincerely; for, not to offer our praiſes heartily, is, in the ſight of God, not to praiſe him at all. This addreſs of praiſe may properly be concluded with an expreſs renewal of our covenant with God, declaring our continued repeated reſolution of being devoted to him, and particularly of living to his glory the enſuing day.

7. It may be proper, after this, to take a proſpect of the day before us, ſo far as we can properly foreſee, in general, where and how it may be ſpent; and ſeriouſly to reflect, "How ſhall I employ myſelf for God this day? What buſineſs is to be done, and in what order? What opportunities may I expect, either of doing or of receiving good? What temptations am I likely to be aſſaulted with, in any place, company, or circumſtance which may proba-

bly occur? In what inſtances have I lately failed? And how ſhall I be ſafeſt now?"

8. After this review, it will be proper to offer up a ſhort prayer, begging that God would quicken us to each of theſe foreſeen duties; that he would fortify us againſt each of theſe apprehended dangers; that he would grant us ſucceſs in ſuch or ſuch a buſineſs undertaken for his glory; and alſo that he would help us to diſcover and improve unforeſeen opportunities, to reſiſt unexpected temptations, and to bear patiently and religiouſly any afflictions which may ſurpriſe us in the day on which we are entering.

9. I would adviſe you after this to read ſome portion of ſcripture; not a great deal, nor the whole Bible in its courſe; but ſome ſelect leſſons out of its moſt uſeful parts; perhaps ten or twelve verſes; nor troubling yourſelf much about the exact connexion, or other critical niceties which may occur, (though at other times I would recommend them to your inquiry, as you have ability and opportunity;) but conſidering them merely in a devotional and practical view. Here take ſuch inſtructions as readily preſent themſelves to your thoughts, repeat them over to your own conſcience, and charge your heart religiouſly to obſerve them, and act upon them under a ſenſe of the divine authority which attends them. And if you pray over the ſubſtance of this ſcripture, with your Bible open before you, it may impreſs your memory and you heart yet more deeply, and may form you to a copiouſneſs and variety both of thought and expreſſion in prayer.

10. It might be proper to cloſe theſe devotions with a pſalm or hymn; and I rejoice with you, that through the pious care of Dr. WATTS, and ſome other ſacred poets, we are provided with ſo rich a variety for the aſſiſtance of the cloſet and family on theſe occaſions, as well as for the ſervice of the ſanctuary.

11. [II.] The moſt material directions which have occured to me, relating to the progreſs of the day, are theſe: That we be ſerious in the devotions of the day; that we delight in the buſineſs of it, that is, in the proſecution of our worldly callings; that we be temperate and prudent in the recreations of it; that we carefully mark the providences of the day; that we cautiouſly guard againſt the temptations of it; that we keep up a lively and humble depen-

dence upon the divine influence, suitable to every emergency of it; that we govern our thoughts well in the solitudes of the day, and our discourses well in the conversations of it. These, Sir, were the heads of a sermon which you lately heard me preach on this occasion, and to which I know you referred in that request which I am now endeavouring to answer. I will, therefore, touch upon the most material hints which fell under each of these particulars.

12. (1.) For seriousness in devotion, whether public or domestic; let us take a few moments before we enter upon such solemnities, to pause and reflect on the perfections of the God we are addressing, on the importance of the business we are commencing, on the pleasure and advantage of a regular and devout attendance, and on the guilt and folly of an hypocritical formality. When engaged, let us maintain a strict watchfulness over our own spirits, and check the first wanderings of thought. And when the duty is over, let us immediately reflect on the manner in which it has been performed, and ask our consciences whether we have reason to conclude that we are accepted of God in it? For there is a certain manner of going through these offices, which our own hearts will immediately tell us it is impossible for God to approve; and if we have inadvertently fallen into it, we ought to be deeply humbled before God for it, lest *our very prayer become sin.*

13. (2.) As for the hours of worldly business; whether it be, as with you, that of the hands; or whether it be the labour of a learned life, not immediately relating to religious matters; let us set to the prosecution of it with a sense of God's authority, and with a regard to his glory. Let us avoid a dreaming, sluggish, indolent temper, which nods over its work, and does only the business of one hour in two or three. In opposition to this, which runs through the life of some people, who yet think they are never idle, let us endeavour to dispatch as much as we conveniently can in a little time; considering that it is but little we have in all. And let us be habitually sensible of the need we have of the divine blessing to make our labours successful.

14. (3.) For seasons of diversion; let us take care that our recreations be well chosen; that they be pursued with a good intention, to fit us for a renewed application

to the labours of life; and thus that they be only used in subordination to the honour of God, the great end of all our actions. Let us take heed that our hearts be not estranged from God by them; and that they do not take up too much of our time; always remembering that the faculties of the human nature, and the advantages of the Christian revelation, were not given us in vain; but that we are always to be in pursuit of some great and honourable end, and to indulge ourselves in amusements and diversions no farther than as they make a part in a scheme of rational and manly, benevolent and pious conduct.

15. (4.) For the observation of providences; it will be useful to regard the divine interposition in our comforts and in our afflictions. In our comforts, whether more common or more extraordinary; that we find ourselves in continued health; that we are furnished with food for our support and pleasure; that we have so many pleasant ways of employing our time; that we have so many agreeable friends, and those so good and so happy; that our business goes on prosperously; that we go out and come in safely; and that we enjoy composure and cheerfulness of spirit, without which nothing else could be enjoyed. All these should be regarded as providential favours, and due acknowledgments should be made to God on these accounts, as we pass through such agreeable scenes. On the other hand, providence is to be regarded in every disappointment, in every loss, in every pain, in every instance of unkindness from those who have professed friendship; and we should endeavour to argue ourselves into a patient submission, from this consideration, that the hand of God is always mediately, if not immediately, in each of them; and that if they are not properly the work of providence, they are at least under its direction. It is a reflection which we should particularly make with relation to those little cross accidents (as we are ready to call them) and those infirmities and follies in the temper and conduct of our intimate friends, which may else be ready to discompose us. And it is the more necessary to guard our minds here, as wise and good men often lose the command of themselves on these comparatively little occasions; who, calling up reason and religion to their assistance, stand the shock of great calamities with fortitude and resolution.

16. (5.) For watchfulneſs againſt temptations; it is neceſſary, when changing our place or our employment, to reflect, "What ſnares attend me here?" And as this ſhould be our habitual care, ſo we ſhould eſpecially guard againſt thoſe ſnares which in the morning we foreſaw. And when we are entering on thoſe circumſtances in which we expected the aſſault, we ſhould reflect, eſpecially if it be a matter of great importance, "Now the combat is going to begin; now God and the bleſſed angels are obſerving what conſtancy, what fortitude there is in my ſoul; and how far the divine authority, and the remembrance of my own prayers and reſolutions will weigh with me, when it comes to the trial."

17. (6.) As for dependence on divine grace and influence; it muſt be univerſal; and ſince we always need it, we muſt never forget that neceſſity. A moment ſpent in humble, fervent breathings after the communications of the divine aſſiſtance, may do more good than many minutes ſpent in mere reaſonings; and though indeed this ſhould not be neglected, ſince the light of reaſon is a kind of divine illumination, yet ſtill it ought to be purſued in a due ſenſe of our dependence on the Father of lights; or, where we *think ourſelves wiſeſt, we may become vain in our imaginations*. Let us therefore always call upon God; and ſay, for inſtance, when we are going to pray, *Lord, fix my attention! Awaken my holy affections, and pour out upon me the Spirit of grace and ſupplication!* When taking up the Bible, or any other good book, *Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.* Enlighten mine underſtanding! Warm my heart! May my good reſolutions be confirmed, and all the courſe of my life in a proper manner regulated! When addreſſing ourſelves to any worldly buſineſs, *Lord, proſper thou the work of mine hands upon me*, and give thy bleſſing to my honeſt endeavours! When going to any kind of recreation, Lord, bleſs my refreſhments; let me not forget thee in them, but ſtill keep thy glory in view! When coming into company, Lord, may I do and get good! *Let no corrupt communication proceed out of my mouth, but that which is good to the uſe of edifying, that it may miniſter grace to the hearers!* When entering upon difficulties, Lord, give me *that wiſdom, which is profitable to direct! Teach me thy way, and lead me in a plain path!*

When encountering with temptations, *Let thy ſtrength, O gracious Redeemer, be made perfect in my weakneſs!* Theſe inſtances may illuſtrate the deſign of this direction, though they be far from a complete enumeration of all the circumſtances in which it is to be regarded.

18. (7.) For the government of our thoughts in ſolitude; let us accuſtom ourſelves, on all occaſions, to exerciſe a due command over our thoughts. Let us take care of thoſe entanglements of paſſion, and thoſe attachments to any preſent intereſt in view, which would deprive us of our power over them. Let us ſet before us ſome profitable ſubject of thought; ſuch as the perfections of the bleſſed God, the love of Chriſt, the value of time, the certainty and importance of death and judgment, and of the eternity of happineſs or miſery which is to follow. Let us alſo at ſuch intervals reflect on what we have obſerved, as to the ſtate of our own ſouls, with regard to the advance or decline of religion; or on the laſt ſermon we have heard, or the laſt portion of ſcripture we have read. You may perhaps in this connexion, Sir, recollect what I have (if I remember right) propoſed to you in converſation; that it may be very uſeful to ſelect ſome one verſe of ſcripture, which we had met with in the morning, and to treaſure it up in our mind, reſolving to think of that at any time when we are at a loſs for matter of pious reflection, in any intervals of leiſure for entering upon it. This will often be as a ſpring, from whence many profitable and delightful thoughts may ariſe, which perhaps we did not before ſee in that connexion and force. Or, if it ſhould not be ſo, yet I am perſuaded it will be much better to repeat the ſame ſcripture in our mind an hundred times in a day, with ſome pious ejaculations formed upon it, than to leave our thoughts at the mercy of all thoſe various trifles, which may otherwiſe intrude upon us; the variety of which will be far from making amends for their vanity.

19. (8.) Laſtly, for the government of our diſcourſe in company; we ſhould take care that nothing may eſcape us which can expoſe us, or our Chriſtian profeſſion, to cenſure and reproach; nothing injurious to thoſe that are abſent, or to thoſe that are preſent; nothing malignant, nothing inſincere, nothing which may corrupt, nothing which may provoke, nothing which may miſlead thoſe that are

about us. Nor should we by any means be content that what we say is innocent; it should be our desire that it may be edifying to ourselves and others. In this view, we should endeavour to have some subject of useful discourse always ready, in which we may be assisted by these hints given about furniture for thought under the former head. We should watch for decent opportunities of introducing useful reflection; and if a pious friend attempt to do it, we should endeavour to second it immediately. When the conversation does not turn directly on religious subjects, we should endeavour to make it improving some other way; we should reflect on the character and capacities of our company, that we may lead them to talk of what they understand best; for their discourses on those subjects will probably be most pleasing to themselves, as well as most useful to us. And in pauses of discourse, it may not be improper to lift up an holy ejaculation to God, that his grace may assist us and our friends in our endeavours to do good to each other; that all we say and do may be worthy the character of reasonable creatures, and of Christians.

20. [III.] The directions for a religious closing of the day, which I shall here mention, are only two. Let us see to it, that the secret duties of the evening be well performed; and let us lie down on our beds in a pious frame.

21. (1.) For secret devotion in the evening, I would propose a method something different from that in the morning; but still, as then, with due allowances for circumstances, which may make unthought of alterations proper. I should, Sir, advise to read a portion of scripture in the first place, with suitable reflections and prayers, as above; then to read a hymn or psalm; after this to enter on self-examination, to be followed by a longer prayer than that which followed reading, to be formed on this review of the day. In this address to the throne of grace, it will be highly proper to entreat that God would pardon the omissions and offences of the day; to praise him for mercies temporal and spiritual; to recommend ourselves to his protection for the ensuing night; with proper petitions for others, whom we ought to bear on our hearts before him; and particularly for those friends with whom we have conversed or corresponded in the preceding day. Many other concerns will occur, both in morning and evening prayer,

which I have not here hinted at; but I did not apprehend that a full enumeration of these things belonged by any means to our present purpose.

22. Before I quit this head, I must take the liberty to remind you that self-examination is so important a duty, that it will be worth our while to spend a few words upon it. And this branch of it is so easy, that when we have proper questions before us, any person of a common understanding may hope to go through it with advantage under the divine blessing. I offer you, therefore, the following queries, which I hope you will, with such alterations as you may judge requisite, keep near you for daily use. "Did I awake as with God this morning, and rise with a grateful sense of his goodness? How were the secret devotions of the morning performed? Did I offer my solemn praises, and renew the dedication of myself to God, with becoming attention and suitable affections? Did I lay my scheme for the business of the day wisely and well? How did I read the scripture, and any other devotional or practical piece, which I might afterwards conveniently review? Did it do my heart good, or was it a mere amusement? How hath the other stated devotions of the day been attended, whether in the family or in public? Have I pursued the common business of this day with diligence and spirituality; doing every thing in season, and with all convenient dispatch, and *as unto the Lord?* What time have I lost this day, in the morning or the forenoon, in the afternoon, or in the evening; (for these divisions will assist your recollection) and what has occasioned the loss of it? With what temper, and under what regulations have the recreations of this day been pursued? Have I seen the hand of God in my mercies, health, cheerfulness, food, clothing, books, preservation in journeys, success of business, conversation and kindness of friends, &c.? Have I seen it in afflictions, and particularly in little things which had a tendency to vex and disquiet me? And with regard to this interposition, have I received my comforts thankfully, and my afflictions submissively? How have I guarded against the temptations of the day, particularly against this or that temptation which I foresaw in the morning? Have I maintained an humble dependence on divine influences? Have I *lived by faith on the Son of God*, and regarded Christ this day as my teacher and gov-

ernor, my atonement and interceſſor, my example and guardian, my ſtrength and forerunner? Have I been looking forward to death and eternity this day, and conſidered myſelf as a probationer for heaven, and through grace an expectant of it? Have I governed my thoughts well, eſpecially in ſuch and ſuch an interval of ſolitude? How was my ſubject of thought this day choſen, and how was it regarded? Have I governed my diſcourſes well in ſuch and ſuch company? Did I ſay nothing paſſionate, miſchievous, ſlanderous, imprudent, impertinent? Has my heart this day been full of love to God, and to all mankind? And have I ſought, and found, and improved opportunities of doing and of getting good? With what attention and improvement have I read the ſcripture this evening? How was ſelf-examination performed the laſt night? And how have I profited this day by any remarks I then made on former negligences and miſtakes? With what temper did I then lie down and compoſe myſelf to ſleep?"

23. You will eaſily ſee, Sir, that theſe queſtions are ſo adjuſted as to be an abridgment of the moſt material advices I have given in this letter; and I believe I need not, to a perſon of your underſtanding, ſay any thing as to the uſefulneſs of ſuch inquiries. Conſcience will anſwer them in a few minutes; but if you think them too large and particular, you may make a ſtill ſhorter abſtract for daily uſe, and reſerve theſe, with ſuch obvious alterations as will then be neceſſary, for ſeaſons of more than ordinary exactneſs in review, which I hope will occur at leaſt once a week. Secret devotion being thus performed before a drowſineſs render us unfit for it, the interval between that and our going to reſt, muſt be conducted by the rules mentioned under the next head. And nothing will farther remain to be conſidered here, but,

24. (2.) The ſentiments with which we ſhould lie down and compoſe ourſelves to ſleep. Now, here it is obviouſly ſuitable to think of the divine goodneſs in adding another day, and the mercies of it, to the former days and mercies of our life; to take notice of the indulgence of Providence in giving us commodious habitations and eaſy beds, and continuing to us ſuch health of body, that we can lay ourſelves down at eaſe upon them, and ſuch ſerenity of mind as leaves us any room to hope for refreſhing ſleep; a

refreſhment to be ſought not merely as an indulgence to animal nature, but as what our wiſe Creator, in order to keep us humble in the midſt of ſo many infirmities, has been pleaſed to make neceſſary to our being able to purſue his ſervice with renewed alacrity. Thus may our ſleeping, as well as our waking hours be, in ſome ſenſe, devoted to God. And when we are juſt going to reſign ourſelves to the image of death (to what one of the ancients beautifully calls its leſſer myſteries) it is alſo evidently proper to think ſeriouſly of that end of all the living, and to renew thoſe actings of repentance and faith which we ſhould judge neceſſary, if we were to wake no more here. You have once, Sir, ſeen a meditation of that kind in my hand; I will tranſcribe it for you in the poſtſcript; and ſhall add no more to this head, but here put a cloſe to the directions you deſired.

25. I am perſuaded, the moſt important of them have, in one form or another, been long regarded by you, and made governing maxims of your life. I ſhall greatly rejoice if the review of theſe, and the examination and trial of the reſt, may be the means of leading you into more intimate communion with God, and ſo of rendering your life more pleaſant and uſeful, and your eternity, whenever that is to commence, more glorious. There is not a human creature upon earth whom I ſhould not delight to ſerve in theſe important intereſts; but I can faithfully aſſure you, that I am, with particular reſpect, Dear Sir,

Your very affectionate friend and ſervant.

26. This, reader, with the alterations of a very few words, is the letter I wrote to a worthy friend, (now, I doubt not, with God) about ſixteen years ago; and I can aſſuredly ſay, that the experience of each of theſe years has confirmed me in theſe views, and eſtabliſhed me in the perſuaſion, that one day thus ſpent is preferable to whole years of ſenſuality and the neglect of religion. I choſe to inſert the letter as it is, becauſe I thought the freedom and particularity of the advice I had given in it, would appear moſt natural in its original form; and as I propoſe to enforce theſe advices in the next chapter, I ſhall conclude this with that meditation which I promiſed my friend as a poſtſcript; and which I could wiſh you to make ſo familiar to yourſelf, as that you might be able to recollect the ſubſtance of it whenever you compoſe yourſelf to ſleep.

A ſerious View of Death, proper to be taken as we lie down on our Beds.

O MY ſoul, look forward a little, with ſeriouſneſs and attention, and *learn wiſdom by the conſideration of thy latter end.* Another of thy mortal days is now numbered and finiſhed; and as I have put off my clothes, and laid myſelf upon my bed for the repoſe of the night, ſo will the day of life quickly come to its period; ſo muſt the body itſelf be put off, and laid to its repoſe in a bed of duſt. There let it reſt; for it will be no more regarded by me than the clothes which I have now laid aſide. I have another far more important concern to attend. Think, O my ſoul, when death comes, thou art to enter upon the eternal world, and to be fixed either in heaven or hell. All the ſchemes and cares, the hopes and fears, the pleaſures and ſorrows of life will come to their period, and the world of ſpirits will open upon thee. And O, how ſoon may it open; perhaps before the returning ſun bring on the light of another day. To-morrow's ſun may not enlighten mine eyes, but only ſhine round a ſenſeleſs corpſe, which may lie in the place of this animated body; at leaſt the death of many in the flower of their age, and many who were ſuperior to me in capacity, piety, and the proſpects of uſefulneſs, may loudly warn me not to depend on a long life, and engage me rather to wonder that I am continued here ſo many years, than to be ſurpriſed if I am ſpeedily removed.

And now, O my ſoul, anſwer, as in the ſight of God, art thou ready? Art thou ready? Is there no ſin unforſaken, and ſo unrepented of, to fill me with anguiſh in my departing moments, and to make me tremble on the brink of eternity? Dread to remain under the guilt of it, and this moment renew thy moſt earneſt applications to the mercy of God and the blood of a Redeemer, for deliverance from it.

But if the great account be already adjuſted, if thou haſt cordially repented of thy numerous offences, if thou haſt ſincerely committed thyſelf by faith into the hands of the bleſſed Jeſus, and haſt not renounced thy covenant with him by returning to the allowed practice of ſin, then ſtart not at the thoughts of a ſeparation; it is not in the power

of death to hurt a soul devoted to God, and united to the great Redeemer. It may take me from my worldly comforts; it may disconcert and break my schemes for service on earth; but, O my soul, diviner entertainments and nobler services await thee beyond the grave. Forever blessed be the name of God, and the love of Jesus, for these quieting, encouraging, joyful views! I will now *lay me down in peace, and sleep*, free from the fears of what shall be the issue of this night, whether life or death may be appointed for me. *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit;* for *thou hast redeemed me, O God of truth:* and therefore I can cheerfully refer it to thy choice, whether I shall wake in this world or another.

CHAP. XX.

A serious Persuasive to such a Method of spending our Days, as is represented in the former Chapter.

Christians fix their views too low, and indulge too indolent a disposition, which makes it the more necessary to urge such a life as that under consideration, 1, 2. It is therefore enforced, (1.) From its being apparently reasonable, considering ourselves as the creatures of God, and as redeemed by the blood of Christ, 3. (2.) From its evident tendency to conduce to our comfort in life, 4. (3.) From the influence it will have to promote our usefulness to others, 5. (4.) From its efficacy to make afflictions lighter, 6 (5.) From its happy aspect on death, 7, and (6.) On eternity, 8. Whereas not to desire improvement, would argue a soul destitute of religion, 9. A prayer suited to the state of a soul who longs to attain the life recommended above.

1. I HAVE been assigning in the preceding chapter, what I fear will seem to some of my readers so hard a task, that they will want courage to attempt it; and it is indeed a life, in many respects, so far above that of the generality of Christians, that I am not without apprehensions that many, who deserve the name, may think the directions, after all the precautions with which I have proposed them, are carried to an unnecessary degree of nicety and strictness. But I am persuaded much of the credit and comfort of Christianity is lost in consequence of its professors fixing their aims too low, and not conceiv-

ing of their high and holy calling in so elevated and sublime a view as the nature of religion would require, and the word of God direct. I am fully convinced, that the expressions of *walking with God; of being in the fear of the Lord all the day long;* and above all, that of *loving the Lord our God with all our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength*, must require, if not all these circumstances, yet the substance of all that I have been recommending, so far as we have capacity, leisure, and opportunity; and I cannot but think, that many might command more of the latter, and perhaps improve their capacities too, if they would take a due care in the improvement of themselves, if they would give up vain and unnecessary diversions, and certain indulgencies, which only suit and delight the lower part of our nature, and (to say the best of them) deprive us of pleasures much better than themselves, if they do not plunge us into guilt. Many of these rules would appear easily practicable, if men would learn to know the value of time, and particularly to redeem it from unnecessary sleep, which wastes so many golden hours of the day; hours in which many of God's servants are delighting themselves in him, and drinking in full draughts of the water of life, while these their brethren are slumbering upon their beds, and lost in vain dreams, as far below the common entertainments of a rational creature, as the pleasures of the sublimest devotion are above them.

2. I know, likewise, that the mind is very fickle and inconstant, and that it is a hard thing to preserve such a government and authority over your thoughts as would be very desirable, and as the plan I have laid down will require. But so much of the honour of God, and so much of our own true happiness depends upon it, that I beg you will give me a patient and attentive hearing while I am pleading with you, and that you will seriously examine the arguments, and then judge whether a care and conduct like that which I have advised, be not in itself seasonable; and whether it will not be highly conducive to your comfort and usefulness in life, your peace in death, and the advancement and increase of your eternal glory.

3. Let conscience say, whether such a life, as I have described above, be not in itself highly reasonable. Look

over the ſubſtance of it again, and bring it into cloſe examination; for I am very apprehenſive that ſome weak objections may ariſe againſt the whole, which may, in their conſequences, affect particulars, againſt which no reaſonable man would preſume to make any objection at all. Recollect, O Chriſtian, and carry it with you in your memory and your heart, while you are purſuing this review, that you are the creature of God, that you are purchaſed with the blood of Jeſus; and then ſay, whether theſe relations in which you ſtand, do not demand all that application and reſolution to which I would engage you. Suppoſe all the counſels I have given reduced into practice; ſuppoſe every day begun and concluded with ſuch devout breathings after God, and ſuch holy retirements for morning and evening converſe with him and your own heart; ſuppoſe a daily care in contriving how your time may be managed, and in reflecting how it has been employed; ſuppoſe this regard to God, this ſenſe of his preſence, and zeal for his glory, to run through your acts of worſhip, your hours of buſineſs and recreations; ſuppoſe this attention to Providence, this regard againſt temptations, this dependence upon divine influence, this government of the thoughts in ſolitude and of the diſcourſes in company; nay, I will add farther, ſuppoſe every particular direction given to be purſued, excepting when particular caſes occur, with reſpect to which you ſhall be able in conſcience to ſay, "I wave it not from indolence and careleſſneſs, but becauſe I think it will juſt now be more pleaſing to God to be doing ſomething elſe;" which may often happen in human life where general rules are beſt concerted; ſuppoſe, I ſay, all this to be done, not for a day, or a week, but through the remainder of life whether longer or ſhorter; and ſuppoſe this to be reviewed at the cloſe of life, in the full exerciſe of your rational faculties, will there be reaſon to ſay, in the reflection, "I have taken too much pains in religion; the Author of my being did not deſerve all this from me; leſs diligence, leſs fidelity, leſs zeal than this, might have been equivalent for the blood which was ſhed for my redemption. A part of my heart, a part of my time, a part of my labours, might have ſufficed for him who hath given me all my powers; for him, who hath delivered me from that

deſtruction which would have made them my everlaſting torment; for him who is raiſing me to the regions of a bleſſed immortality." Can you with any face ſay this? If you cannot, then ſurely your conſcience bears witneſs, that all I have recommended under the limitations above is reaſonable; that duty and gratitude require it; and conſequently that, by every allowed failure in it, you bring guilt upon your own ſoul, you offend God, and act unworthy your Chriſtian profeſſion.

4. I entreat you farther to conſider whether ſuch a conduct, as I have now been recommending, would not conduce much to your comfort and uſefulneſs in life. Reflect ſeriouſly what is true happineſs. Does it conſiſt in diſtance from God, or in nearneſs to him? Surely you cannot be a Chriſtian, ſurely you cannot be a rational man, if you doubt whether communion with the great Father of our ſpirits be a pleaſure and felicity; and if it be, then ſurely they enjoy moſt of it who keep him moſt conſtantly in view. You cannot but know in your own conſcience that it is this which makes the happineſs of heaven; and therefore the more of it any man enjoys upon earth, the more of heaven comes down into his ſoul. If you have made any trial of religion, though it be but a few months or weeks ſince you firſt became acquainted with it, you muſt be ſome judge of it upon your own experience, which have been the moſt pleaſant days of your life. Have they not been thoſe in which you have acted moſt upon theſe principles; thoſe, in which you have moſt ſteadily and reſolutely carried them through every hour of time, and every circumſtance of life? The check which you muſt, in many inſtances, give to your own inclinations, might ſeem diſagreeable; but it would ſurely be overbalanced in a moſt happy manner by the ſatisfaction you would find in a conſciouſneſs of ſelf-government; in having ſuch a command over your thoughts, affections and actions, as is much more glorious than any authority over others can be.

5. I would alſo entreat you to conſider the influence which ſuch a conduct as this might have upon the happineſs of others. And it is eaſy to be ſeen it muſt be very great; as you would find your heart always diſpoſed to watch every opportunity of doing good, and to ſeize it with eagerneſs and delight. It would engage you to make

it the ſtudy and buſineſs of your life to order things in ſuch a manner, that the end of one kind and uſeful action might be the beginning of another; in which you would go on as naturally as the inferior animals do in thoſe productions and actions by which mankind are relieved or enriched; or as the earth bears her ſucceſſive crops of different vegetable ſupplies. And though mankind be, in this corrupt ſtate, ſo unhappily inclined to imitate evil examples rather than good; yet it may be expected, that while your light ſhines before men, ſome ſeeing your good works, will endeavour to tranſcribe them in their own lives, and ſo to *glorify your Father who is in heaven.* The charms of ſuch beautiful models would ſurely impreſs ſome and incline them at leaſt to attempt an imitation; and every attempt would diſpoſe to another. And thus, through the divine goodneſs, you might be entitled to a ſhare in the praiſe, and the reward, not only of the good you had immediately done yourſelf, but likewiſe of that which you had engaged others to do. And no eye but that of an all-ſearching God, can ſee into what diſtant times or places the bleſſed conſequences may reach. In every inſtance in which theſe conſequences appear, it will put a generous and ſublime joy into your heart, which no worldly proſperity could afford, and which would be the livelieſt emblem of that high delight which the bleſſed God feels, in ſeeing and making his creatures happy.

6. It is true, indeed, that amidſt all theſe pious and benevolent cares, afflictions may come, and in ſome meaſure interrupt you in the midſt of your projected ſchemes. But ſurely theſe afflictions will ſit much lighter when your heart is gladdened with the peaceful and joyful reflections of your own mind, and with ſo honourable a teſtimony of conſcience before God and man. Delightful will it be to go back to paſt ſcenes in your pleaſing review, and to think that you have not only been ſincerely humbling yourſelf for thoſe paſt offences, which afflictions may bring to your remembrance; but that you have given ſubſtantial proofs of the ſincerity of that humiliation, by a real reformation of what has been amiſs, and by acting with ſtrenuous and vigorous reſolution on the contrary principle. And while converſe with God, and doing good to men, are made the great buſineſs and pleaſure of life, you will find

a thousand opportunities of enjoyment, even in the midst of those afflictions, which would render you so incapable of relishing the pleasures of sense, that the mention of them might, in those circumstances, seem an insult and reproach.

7. At length death will come; that solemn and important hour, which hath been passed through by so many thousands, who have in the main lived such a life, and by so many millions who have neglected it. And let conscience say, if there was ever one of all these millions who had then any reason to rejoice in that neglect; or any one among the most strict and exemplary Christians, who then lamented that his heart and life had been too zealously devoted to God? Let conscience say, whether they have wished to have a part of that time, which they have thus employed, given back to them again, that they might be more conformed to this world; that they might plunge themselves deeper into its amusements, or pursue its honours, its possessions, or its pleasures, with greater eagerness than they had done? If you were yourself dying, and a dear friend or child stood near you, and this book, and the last chapter of it should chance to come into your thoughts, would you caution that friend or child against conducting himself by such rules as I have advanced? The question may perhaps seem unnecessary, where the answer is so plain and so certain. Well, then, let me beseech you to learn how you should live, by reflecting how you would die, and what course you would wish to look back upon, when you are just quitting this world, and entering upon another. Think seriously, what if death should surprise you on a sudden, and you should be called into eternity at an hour's or a minute's warning; would you not wish that your last day should have been thus begun, and the course of it, if it were a day of health and activity, should have been thus managed? Would you not wish that your Lord should find you engaged in such thoughts, and in such pursuits? Would not the passage, the flight from earth to heaven, be most easy, most pleasant, in this view and connexion? And on the other hand, if death should make more gradual approaches, would not the remembrance of such a pious, holy, humble, diligent and useful life, make a dying bed much soft-

er and eaſier than it would otherwiſe be? You would not die depending upon theſe things? God forbid that you ſhould! Senſible of your many imperfections, you would, no doubt, deſire to throw yourſelf at the feet of Chriſt, that you might appear before God adorned with his righteouſneſs, and waſhed from your ſins in his blood. You would alſo, with your dying breath, aſcribe to the riches of his grace, every good diſpoſition you had found in your heart, and every worthy action you had been enabled to perform; but would it not give you a delight, worthy of being purchaſed with ten thouſand worlds, to reflect, that *his grace beſtowed on you had not been in vain;* but that you had, from an humble principle of grateful love, glorified your heavenly Father on earth, and, in ſome degree, though not with the perfection you could deſire, *finiſhed the work which he had given you to do;* that you had been living for many years paſt as on the borders of heaven, and endeavouring to form your heart and life to the temper and manners of its inhabitants?

8. And once more let me entreat you to reflect on the view you will have of this matter when you come into a world of glory, if (which I hope will be the happy caſe) divine mercy conduct you thither. Will not your reception there be affected by your care, or negligence, in this holy courſe? Will it appear an indifferent thing in the eye of the bleſſed Jeſus, who diſtributes the crowns, and allots the thrones there, whether you have been amongſt the moſt zealous, or the moſt indolent of his ſervants? Surely you muſt wiſh to have *an entrance adminiſtered unto you abundantly into the kingdom of your Lord and Saviour!* And what can more certainly conduce to it, than to be always abounding in his work? You cannot think ſo meanly of that glorious ſtate, as to imagine that you ſhall there look round about with a ſecret diſappointment, and ſay in your heart, that you overvalued the inheritance you have received, and purſued it with too much earneſtneſs. You will not ſurely complain, that it had too many of your thoughts and cares; but, on the contrary, you have the higheſt reaſon to believe, that if any thing were capable of exciting your indignation and your grief there, it would be that, amidſt ſo many motives, and ſo many advantages, you exerted yourſelf no more in the purſuit of ſuch a prize.

9. But I will not enlarge on ſo clear a caſe, and therefore conclude the chapter with reminding you, that to allow yourſelf deliberately to ſit down ſatisfied with any imperfect attainments in religion, and to look upon a more confirmed and improved ſtate of it as what you do not deſire, nay, as what you ſecretly reſolve that you will not purſue, is one of the moſt fatal ſigns we can well imagine, that you are an entire ſtranger to the firſt principles of it.

A Prayer ſuited to the State of the Soul who deſires to attain the Life recommended above.

BLESSED GOD, I cannot contradict the force of theſe reaſonings; O that I might feel more than ever the laſting effects of them! Thou art the great fountain of being and of happineſs; and as from thee my being was derived, ſo from thee my happineſs directly flows; and the nearer I am to thee, the purer and the more delicious is the ſtream. *With thee is the fountain of life;* in thy *light* may I *ſee light!* The great object of my final hope is to dwell forever with thee; give me now ſome foretaſte of that delight! Give me, I beſeech thee, to experience *the bleſſedneſs of that man who feareth the Lord, and who delighteth greatly in his commandments*, and ſo form my heart by thy grace, that I may *be in the fear of the Lord all the day long!*

To thee may my awaking thoughts be directed, and with the firſt ray of light that viſits mine opening eyes, *lift up, O Lord, the light of thy countenance upon me!* When my faculties are rouſed from that broken ſtate in which they lay, while buried, and as it were annihilated, in ſleep, may my firſt actions be conſecrated to thee, O God, who giveſt me light; who giveſt me, as it were, every morning a new life and new reaſon! Enable my heart to pour itſelf out before thee with a filial reverence, freedom, and endearment! And may I hearken to God, as I deſire that he ſhould hearken unto me! May thy word be read with attention and pleaſure! May my ſoul be delivered into the mould of it; and may I *hide it in mine heart, that I may not ſin againſt thee!* Animated by the great motives

there ſuggeſted, may I every morning be renewing the dedication of myſelf to thee, through Jeſus Chriſt, thy beloved Son; and be deriving from him, new ſupplies of that bleſſed Spirit of thine, whoſe influences are the life of my ſoul!

And being thus prepared, do thou, Lord, lead me forth by the hand to all the duties and events of the day! In that calling, wherein thou haſt been pleaſed to call me, may I abide with thee; not being *ſlothful in buſineſs, but fervent in ſpirit, ſerving the Lord!* May I know the value of time, and always improve it to the beſt advantage, in ſuch duties as thou haſt aſſigned me; how low ſoever they may ſeem, or how painful ſoever they may be! To thy glory, O Lord, may the labours of life be purſued; and to thy glory may the refreſhments of it be ſought! *Whether I eat or drink, or whatever I do,* may that end ſtill be kept in view, and may it be attained! And may every refreſhment and releaſe from buſineſs prepare me to ſerve thee with greater vigour and reſolution.

May mine eye be watchful to obſerve the deſcent of mercies from thee; and may a grateful ſenſe of thine hand in them add a ſavour and a reliſh to all! And when afflictions come, which in a world like this, I would accuſtom myſelf to expect, may I remember that they come from thee; and may that fully reconcile me to them, while I firmly believe, that the ſame love which gives us our daily bread, appoints us our daily croſſes; which I would learn to take up, that I may *follow my dear Lord,* with a temper like that which he manifeſted when aſcending Calvary for my ſake; ſaying, like him, *the cup which my Father hath given me, ſhall I not drink it!* And when I enter into temptation, do thou, Lord, *deliver me from evil!* Make me ſenſible, I entreat thee, of my own weakneſs, that my heart may be raiſed to thee for preſent communications of proportionable ſtrength! When I am engaged in the ſociety of others, may it be my deſire and my care that I may do, and receive, as much good as poſſible, and may I continually anſwer the great purpoſes of life, by honouring thee, and diffuſing uſeful knowledge and happineſs in the world! And when alone, may I remember my heavenly Father is with me; and may I enjoy the pleaſure of thy preſence, and feel the animating power of it,

inclining my ſoul to an earneſt deſire to think, and act, as in thy ſight!

Thus let my days be ſpent; and let them always be cloſed in thy fear, and under a ſenſe of thy gracious preſence! Meet me, O Lord, in mine evening retirements! May I chooſe the moſt proper time for them; may I diligently attend to reading and prayer; and when I review my conduct, may I do it with an impartial eye! Let not ſelf-love ſpread a falſe colouring over it; but may I judge myſelf as one that expects to be judged of the Lord, and is very ſolicitous he may be approved by thee, *who ſearcheſt all hearts, and canſt not forget any of my works!* Let *my prayer come up daily before thee as incenſe*, and let *the lifting up of my hands be as the morning and the evening ſacrifice!* May I reſign my powers to ſleep in ſweet calmneſs and ſerenity; conſcious that I have lived to God in the day, and cheerfully perſuaded that I am accepted of thee in Chriſt Jeſus my Lord, and humbly hoping in thy mercy through him, whether my days on earth be prolonged, or *the reſidue of them be cut off in the midſt!* If death comes by a leiſurely advance, may it find me thus employed; and if I am called on a ſudden to exchange worlds, may my laſt days and hours be found to have been conducted by ſuch maxims as theſe; and may I have a ſweet and eaſy paſſage from the ſervices of time to the infinitely nobler ſervices of an immortal ſtate! I aſk it through him, who while on earth was the faireſt pattern and example of every virtue and grace, and who now lives and reigns with thee, *able to ſave to the uttermoſt;* to him, having done all, I would fly, with humble acknowledgment that I am *an unprofitable ſervant; to him be glory forever and ever.* Amen.

CHAP. XXI.

A Caution againſt various Temptations, by which the young Convert may be drawn aſide from the Courſe recommended above.

Dangers continue after the firſt difficulties (conſidered Chap. xx.) are broken through, 1. Particular cautions, (1.) Againſt a ſluggiſh and indolent temper, 2. (2.) Againſt the exceſſive love of

sensitive pleasure, 3. Leading to a neglect of business, and needless expense, 4. (3.) Against the snares of vain company, 5. (4.) Against excessive hurries of worldly business, 6, which is enforced by the fatal consequences these have had in many cases, 7. The chapter concludes with an exhortation to die to this world and live to another, 8; and the young convert's prayer for divine protection against the dangers arising from these snares.

1. THE representation I have been making of the pleasure and advantage of a life spent in devotedness to God, and communion with him, as I have described it above, will, I hope, engage you, my dear reader, to form some purposes, and make some attempt to obtain it. But, from considering the nature and observing the course of things, it appears exceedingly evident, that, besides the general opposition, which I formerly mentioned, as likely to attend you in your first entrance on a religious life, you will find, even after you have resolutely broke through this, a variety of hindrances in any attempts of exemplary piety, and in the prosecution of a remarkably strict and edifying course, will present themselves daily in your path. And whereas you may, by a few resolute efforts, baffle some of the former sort of enemies, these will be perpetually renewing their onsets, and a vigorous struggle must be continually maintained with them. Give me leave now, therefore, to be particular in my cautions against some of the chief of them. And here I would insist upon the difficulties which will arise from indolence and the love of pleasure, from vain company, and from worldly cares. Each of these may prove ensnaring to any, and especially to young persons, to whom I would now have some particular regard.

2. I entreat you, therefore, in the first place, that you would guard against a sluggish and indolent temper. The love of ease insinuates itself into the heart, under a variety of plausible pretences, which are often allowed to pass, when temptations of a grosser nature would not be admitted. The mispending of a little time seems to wise and good men but a small matter; yet this sometimes runs them into great inconveniencies. It often leads them to break in upon the seasons regularly allotted to devotion, and to defer business, which might immediately be done, but being put off from day to day, is not done at all; and therefore the services of life are at least diminished, and

the rewards of eternity diminiſhed proportionably; not to inſiſt upon it, that it very frequently lays the ſoul open to farther temptations, by which it falls, in conſequence of being found unemployed. Be therefore ſuſpicious of the firſt approaches of this kind. Remember, that the ſoul of man is an active being, and that it muſt end its pleaſure in activity. Gird up, therefore, the *loins of your mind.* Endeavour to keep yourſelf always well employed. Be exact, if I may with humble reverence uſe the expreſſion, in your appointments with God. Meet him early in the morning; and ſay not with the ſluggard, when the proper hour of riſing is come, *A little more ſleep, a little more ſlumber.* That time which prudence ſhall adviſe you, give to converſation, and to other recreations; but when that is elapſed, and no unforeſeen and important engagements preſent, riſe and be gone. Quit the company of your deareſt friends, and retire to your proper buſineſs, whether it be in the field, the ſhop, or the cloſet: for by acting contrary to the ſecret dictates of your mind, as to what it is juſt at the preſent moment beſt to do, though it be but in the manner of ſpending half an hour, ſome degree of guilt is contracted, and a habit is cheriſhed, which may draw after it much worſe conſequences. Conſider, therefore, what duties are to be diſpatched, and in what ſeaſons. Form your plan as prudently as you can, and purſue it reſolutely; unleſs any unexpected incident ariſes, which leads you to conclude that duty calls you another way. Allowances for ſuch unthought of interruptions muſt be made; but if, in conſequence of this, you are obliged to omit any thing of importance which you purpoſed to have done to-day; do it if poſſible to-morrow: and do not cut yourſelf out new work till the former plan be diſpatched; unleſs you really judge it, not merely more amuſing, but more important. And always remember, that a ſervant of Chriſt ſhould ſee to it that he determine on theſe occaſions as in his maſter's preſence.

3. Guard alſo againſt an exceſſive love of ſenſitive and animal pleaſure, as that which will be a great hindrance to you in that religious courſe which I have now been urging. You cannot but know that Chriſt has told us, that *a man muſt deny himſelf, and take up his croſs daily, if he deſire*

to become his disciple. Christ, the Son of God, *the former and the heir of all things, pleased not himself;* but submitted to want, to difficulties, and hardships, in the way of duty, and some of them in the extremest kind and degree, for the glory of God, and the salvation of men. In this way we are to follow him; and as we know not how soon we may be called even to *resist unto blood, striving against sin;* it is certainly best to accustom ourselves to that discipline which we may possibly be called out to exercise, even in such rigorous heights. A soft and delicate life will give force to temptations, which might easily be subdued by one who who has habituated himself to *endure hardships as a soldier of Jesus Christ.* It also produces an attachment to this world, and an unwillingness to leave it; which ill becomes those who are strangers and pilgrims on earth, and who expect so soon to be called away to that better country which they profess to seek. Add to this, that what the world calls a life of pleasure, is necessarily a life of expense too, and may perhaps lead you, as it hath done many others, and especially many who have been setting out in the world beyond the limits which Providence has assigned; and so, after a short course of indulgencies, may produce proportionable want. And while in other cases it is true that pity should be shown to the poor, this is a poverty that is justly contemptible, because it is the effect of a man's own folly; and when your want thus *comes upon you as an armed man,* you will not only find yourself stripped of the capacity you might otherwise have secured for performing those works of charity, which are so ornamental to a Christian profession, but, probably, will be under some strong temptations to some low artifice, or mean compliance, quite beneath the Christian character, and that of an upright man. Many, who once made a high profession, after a series of such sorry and scandalous shifts, have fallen into the infamy of bankrupts, and of the worst kind of bankrupts; I mean such as have lavished away on themselves what was indeed the property of others, and so have injured, and perhaps ruined, the industrious, to feed a foolish, luxuriant, or ostentatious honour, which, while indulged, was the shame of their own families, and, when it can be indulged no longer, is their torment. This will be a terrible reproach to relig-

ion; such a reproach to it, that a good man would rather choose to live on bread and water, or indeed to die for want of them, than occasion it.

4. Guard, therefore, I beseech you, against any thing which might tend that way, especially by diligence in business, and by prudence and frugality in expense; which by the divine blessing, may have a very happy influence to make your affairs prosperous, your health vigorous, and your mind easy. But this cannot be attained without keeping a resolute watch over yourself, and strenuously refusing to comply with many proposals which indolence or sensuality will offer in very plausible forms, and for which it will plead that it asks but very little. Take heed, lest in this respect you imitate those fond parents, who, by indulging their children in every little thing they have a mind to, encourage them, by insensible degrees, to grow still more encroaching and imperious in their demands; as if they chose to be ruined with them, rather than to check them in what seems a trifle. Remember and consider that excellent remark, sealed by the ruin of so many thousands; "he that despiseth small things, shall fall by little and little."

5. In this view, give me leave also seriously and tenderly to caution you, my dear reader, against the snares of vain company. I speak not, as before, of that company which is openly licentious and profane. I hope there is something now in your temper and views which would engage you to turn away from such with detestation and horror. But I beseech you to consider, that those companions may be very dangerous, who might at first give you but very little alarm; I mean those, who, though not the declared enemies of religion, and professed followers of vice and disorder, yet nevertheless have no practical sense of divine things on their hearts, so far as can be judged by their conversation and behaviour. You must often of necessity be with such persons, and Christianity not only allows, but requires, that you should, on all expedient occasions of intercourse with them, treat them with civility and respect; but choose not such for your most intimate friends, and do not contrive to spend most of your leisure moments among them. For such converse has a sensible

tendency to alienate the ſoul from God, and to render it unfit for all ſpiritual communion with him. To convince you of this, do but reflect on your own experience, when you have been for many hours together among perſons of ſuch a character. Do you not find yourſelf more indiſpoſed for devotional exerciſes? Do you not find your heart, by inſenſible degrees, more and more inclined to a conformity to this world, and to look with a ſecret diſreliſh on thoſe objects and employments to which reaſon directs as the nobleſt and the beſt? Obſerve the firſt ſymptoms, and guard againſt the ſnare in time; and, for this purpoſe, endeavour to form friendſhips founded in piety, and ſupported by it. *Be a companion of them that fear God, and of them that keep his precepts.* You well know, that in the ſight of God *they are the excellent of the earth;* let them therefore *be all your delight.* And that the peculiar benefit of their friendſhip may not be loſt, endeavour to make the beſt of the hours you ſpend with them. The wiſeſt of men has obſerved, that when "counſel in the heart of a man is like deep waters," that is, when it lies low and concealed, *a man of underſtanding will draw it out.* Endeavour, therefore, on ſuch occaſions, ſo far as you can do it with decency and convenience, to give the converſation a religious turn. And when ſerious and uſeful ſubjects are ſtarted in your preſence, lay hold of them and cultivate them; and, for that purpoſe, *let the word of Chriſt dwell richly in you,* and be continually made *the man of your counſel.*

6. If it be ſo, it will ſecure you, not only from the ſnares of idleneſs and luxury, but from the contagion of every bad example. And it will alſo engage you to guard againſt thoſe exceſſive hurries of worldly buſineſs, which would fill up all your time and thoughts, and thereby choke the good word of God, and render it in a great meaſure, if not quite, unfruitful. Young people are generally of an enterpriſing diſpoſition. Having experienced comparatively little of the fatigues of buſineſs, and of the diſappointments and incumbrances of life, they eaſily ſwallow them up, and annihilate them in their imagination, and fancy that their ſpirit, their application and addreſs, will be able to encounter and ſurmount every obſtacle or hindrance. But the event proves it otherwiſe. Let me entreat you, therefore, to be cautious how you plunge

yourself into a greater variety of business than you are capable of managing as you ought, that is, in consistency with the care of your soul, and the service of God; which certainly ought not on any pretence to be neglected. It is true, indeed, that a prudent regard to your worldly interest would require such a caution; as it is obvious to every careful observer, that multitudes are undone by grasping at more than they can conveniently manage. Hence it has frequently been seen, that while they have seemed *resolved to be rich*, they have *pierced themselves through with many sorrows*, have ruined their own families, and drawn down many others into desolation with them; whereas, could they have been contented with moderate employments, and moderate gains, they might have prospered in their business, and might, by sure degrees, under a divine blessing, have advanced to a great and honourable increase. But if there were no danger at all to be apprehended on this head; if you were as certain of becoming rich and great as you are of perplexing and fatiguing yourself in the attempt; consider, I beseech you, how precarious these enjoyments are. Consider how often a *plentiful table becomes a snare, and that which should have been for a man's welfare, becomes a trap.* Forget not that short lesson, which is so comprehensive of the highest wisdom, *one thing is needful.* Be daily thinking, while the gay and great things of life are glittering before your eyes, how soon death will come and impoverish you at once; how soon it will strip you of all the possessions but those which a naked soul can carry along with it into eternity, when it drops the body in the grave. *Eternity! Eternity! Eternity!* Carry the view of it about with you, if it be possible, through every hour of waking life; and fully persuaded that you have no business, no interest in life, that is inconsistent with it; for whatsoever would be injurious to this view, is not your business, is not your interest. You see, indeed, that the generality of men act as if they thought the great thing which God requires of them, in order to secure his favour, was to get as much of the world as possible; at least as much as they can without any gross immorality, and without risking the loss of all, for making a little addition. And, as if it were to abet this design, they tell others, and perhaps tell themselves, they only

ſeek opportunities of greater uſefulneſs, but, in effect, if they mean any thing more by this than a capacity of uſefulneſs, which, when they have it, they will not exert, they generally deceive themſelves; and one way or another, it is a vain pretence. In moſt inſtances, men ſeek the world—either that they may hoard up riches for the mean and ſcandalous ſatisfaction of looking upon them while they are living, and of thinking, that when they are dead, it will be ſaid of them, that they have left ſo many hundreds or thouſands of pounds behind them; very probably to enſnare their children, or other heirs, (for the vanity is not peculiar to thoſe who have children of their own;)—or elſe, that they may laviſh away their riches on their luſts, and drown themſelves in a gulf of ſenſuality, in which, if reaſon be not loſt, religion is ſoon ſwallowed up, and with it, all the nobleſt pleaſures which can enter into the heart of man. In this view, the generality of rich people appear to me objects of much greater compaſſion than the poor; eſpecially as when both live (which is frequently the caſe) without any fear of God before their eyes, the rich abuſe the greater variety and abundance of his favours, and therefore will probably feel, in that world of future ruin which awaits impenitent ſinners, a more exquiſite ſenſe of their miſery.

7. And let me obſerve to you, my dear reader, leſt you ſhould think yourſelf ſecure from any ſuch danger, that we have great reaſon to apprehend there are many now in a very wretched ſtate, who once thought ſeriouſly of religion when they were firſt ſetting out, in lower circumſtances of life, but they have ſince forſaken God for Mammon, and are now priding themſelves in thoſe golden chains, which, in all probability, before it be long, will leave them to remain in thoſe of darkneſs. When, therefore, an attachment to the world may be followed with ſuch fatal conſequences, *let not thine heart envy ſinners;* and do not, from a deſire of gaining what they have, be guilty of ſuch folly, as to expoſe yourſelf to this double danger of failing in the attempt, or of being undone by the ſucceſs of it. Contract your deſire; endeavour to be eaſy and content with a little; and if Providence call you out to act in a larger ſphere, ſubmit to it in obedience to Providence; but number it among the trials of life, which

it will require a larger proportion of grace to bear well. For, be assured, that as affairs and interest multiply, cares and duties will certainly increase, and probably disappointments and sorrows will increase in an equal proportion.

8. On the whole, learn, by divine grace, to die to the present world; to look upon it as a low state of being which God never intended for the final and complete happiness, or the supreme care, of any one of his children; a world, where something is indeed to be enjoyed, but chiefly from himself; where a great deal is to be borne with patience and resignation; and where some important duties are to be performed, and a course of discipline to be passed through, by which you are to be formed for a better state; to which, as a Christian, you are near, and to which God will call you, perhaps on a sudden, but undoubtedly, if you hold on your way, in the fittest time and the most convenient manner. Refer, therefore, all this to him. Let your hopes and fears, your expectations and desires with regard to this world, be kept as low as possible; and all your thoughts be united, as much as may be, in this one centre, What it is that God would, in present circumstances, have you to be; and what is that method of conduct by which you may most effectually please and glorify him?

The young Convert's Prayer for Divine Protection against the Danger of those Snares.

BLESSED GOD! in the midst of ten thousand snares and dangers, which surround me from without and from within, permit me to look up unto thee with my humble entreaty, that thou wouldst *deliver me from those that rise up against me*, and that *thine eyes may be upon me for good*. When sloth and indolence are ready to seize me, awaken me from that idle dream with lively and affectionate views of that invisible and eternal world to which I am tending! Remind me of what infinite importance it is that I diligently improve those transient moments which thou hast allotted to me as the time of my preparation for it!

When *ſinners entice me*, may I *not conſent!* May holy converſe with God give me a diſreliſh for the converſe of thoſe who are ſtrangers to thee, and who would ſeparate my ſoul from thee! May I *honour them that fear the Lord!* and walking with ſuch wiſe and holy men, may I find I am daily advancing in wiſdom and holineſs! Quicken me, O Lord, by their means; that by me thou mayeſt alſo quicken others! Make me the happy inſtrument of enkindling and animating the flame of divine love in their breaſts; and may it catch from heart to heart, and grow every moment in its progreſs!

Guard me, O Lord, from the love of ſenſual pleaſure! May I ſeriouſly remember, that *to be carnally minded is death!* May it pleaſe thee, therefore, to purify and refine my ſoul by the influences of thine Holy Spirit, that I may always ſhun unlawful gratifications more ſolicitouſly than others purſue them; and that thoſe indulgencies of animal nature, which thou haſt allowed, and which the conſtitution of things renders neceſſary, may be ſoberly and moderately uſed! May I ſtill remember the ſuperior dignity of my ſpiritual and intelligent nature, and may the pleaſures of the man and the Chriſtian be ſought as my nobleſt happineſs! May my ſoul riſe on the wings of holy contemplation, to the regions of inviſible glory; and may I be endeavouring to form myſelf, under the influences of divine grace, for the entertainments of thoſe angelic ſpirits, who live in thy preſence in a happy incapacity of thoſe groſs delights by which ſpirits dwelling in fleſh are ſo often enſnared, and in which they ſo often loſe the memory of their high original, and of thoſe noble hopes which alone are proportionable to it!

Give me, O Lord, to know the ſtation in which thou haſt fixed me, and ſteadily to purſue the duties of it! But deliver me from theſe exceſſive cares of this world, which would ſo engroſs my time and my thoughts, that the one thing needful ſhould be forgotten! May my deſires after worldly poſſeſſions be moderated, by conſidering their uncertain and unſatisfying nature; and while others are laying up treaſures on earth, may I be *rich towards God!* May I never be too buſy to attend to thoſe great affairs which lie between thee and my ſoul; never be ſo engroſſed with the concerns of time, as to neglect the intereſts

of eternity! May I paſs through earth with my heart and hope ſet upon heaven, and feel the attractive influence ſtronger and ſtronger, as I approach ſtill nearer and nearer to that deſirable centre; till the happy moment come, when every earthly object ſhall diſappear from my view, and the ſhining glories of the heavenly world ſhall fill my improved and ſtrengthened ſight, which ſhall then be cheered with that which would now overwhelm me! *Amen.*

CHAP. XXII.

The Caſe of a Spiritual Decay and Languor in Religion.

Declenſions in religion, and relapſes into ſin, with their ſorrowful conſequences, are, in the general, too probable, 1. The caſe of declenſion and languor in religion deſcribed negatively, 2, and poſitively, 3, as diſcovering itſelf, (1.) By a failure in the duties of the cloſet, 4. (2.) By a neglect of ſocial worſhip, 5. (3.) By want of love to our fellow-Chriſtians, 6. (4.) By an undue attachment to ſenſual pleaſures, or ſecular cares, 7. (5.) By prejudices againſt ſome important principles in religion, 8, a ſymptom peculiarly ſad and dangerous, 9, 10. Directions for recovery, 11, immediately to be purſued, 12. A prayer for one under ſpiritual decays.

1. If I am ſo happy as to prevail upon you in the exhortations and cautions I have given, you will probably go on with pleaſure and comfort in religion; and your path will generally be *like the morning light, which ſhineth more and more until the perfect day.* Yet I dare not flatter myſelf with an expectation of ſuch ſucceſs as ſhall carry you above thoſe varieties in temper, conduct, and ſtate, which have been more or leſs the complaint of the beſt of men. Much do I fear, that, how warmly ſoever your heart may be now impreſſed with the repreſentation I have been making, though the great objects of your faith and hope continue unchangeable, your temper towards them will be changed. Much do I fear that you will feel your mind languiſh and tire in the good ways of God! Nay, that you may be prevailed upon to take ſome ſtep out of them, and may thus fall a prey to ſome of thoſe temptations which you now look upon with a holy ſcorn. The probable con-

ſequence of this will be, that God will hide his face from you; that he will ſtretch forth his afflicting hand againſt you; and that you will ſtill ſee your ſorrowful moments, how cheerfully ſoever you may now be *rejoicing in the Lord, and joying in the God of your ſalvation.* I hope, therefore, it may be of ſome ſervice, if this too probable event ſhould happen, to conſider theſe caſes a little more particularly; and I heartily pray that God would make what I ſhall ſay concerning them the means of reſtoring, comforting, and ſtrengthening your ſoul, if he ever ſuffers you in any degree to deviate from him.

2. We will firſt conſider the caſe of ſpiritual declenſions and languor in religion. And here I deſire, that, before I proceed any farther, you would obſerve that I do not comprehend under this head, every abatement of that fervour which a young convert may find when he firſt becomes experimentally acquainted with divine things. Our natures are ſo framed, that the novelty of objects ſtrikes them in ſomething of a peculiar manner; not to urge how much more eaſily our paſſions are impreſſed in the earlier years of life, than when we are more advanced in the journey of it. This, perhaps, is not ſufficiently conſidered. Too great a ſtreſs is commonly laid on the flow of affections; and for want of this, a Chriſtian who is ripened in grace, and greatly advanced in his preparrtions for glory, may ſometimes be ready to lament imaginary rather than real decays, and to ſay, without any juſt foundation, *O that I were as in months paſt.* Therefore you can hardly be too frequently told that religion conſiſts chiefly "in the reſolution of the will for God, and in a conſtant care to avoid whatever we are perſuaded he would diſapprove; to diſpatch the work he has aſſigned us in life, and to promote his glory in the happineſs of mankind." To this we are chiefly to attend, looking in all to the ſimplicity and purity of thoſe motives from which we act, which we know are chiefly regarded by that God who ſearches the heart; humbling ourſelves before him at the ſame time under a ſenſe of our many imperfections, and flying to the blood of Chriſt and the grace of the goſpel.

3. Having given this precaution, I will now a little more particularly deſcribe the caſe which I call the ſtate of a Chriſtian, who is declining in religion, ſo far as it does not

fall in with those which I shall consider in the following chapters. And I must observe, that it chiefly consists in a forgetfulness of divine objects, and a remissness in those various duties to which we stand engaged by that solemn surrender, which we have made of ourselves to the service of God. There will be a variety of symptoms, according to the different circumstances and relations in which the Christian is placed; but some will be of a more universal kind. It will be peculiarly proper to touch on these; and so much the rather as these declensions are often unobserved, like the grey hairs which were upon Ephraim when he knew it not.

4. Should you, my good reader, fall into this state, it will probably first discover itself by a failure in the duties of the closet. Not that I suppose they will at first, or certainly conclude that they will at all, be wholly omitted, but they will be run over in a cold and formal manner. Sloth or some of those other snares which I cautioned you against in the former chapter, will so far prevail upon you, that though perhaps you know and recollect that the proper season for retirement is come, you will sometimes indulge yourself upon your bed in the morning, sometimes in conversation or business in the evening, so as not to have convenient time for it; or perhaps, when you come into your closet at that season, some favourite book you are desirous to read, some correspondence that you choose to carry on, or some other amusement will present itself, and plead to be dispatched first. This will probably take up more time than you imagine; and then secret prayer will be hurried over, and perhaps reading the scripture quite neglected. You will plead, perhaps, that it is but for once; but the same allowance will be made a second and a third time; and it will grow more easy and familiar to you each time than it was the last. And thus God will be mocked, and your own soul will be defrauded of its spiritual meals, if I may be allowed the expression; the word of God will be slighted, and self-examination quite disused; and secret prayer itself will grow a burden rather than a delight, and a trifling ceremony rather than a devout homage, fit for the acceptance of our Father who is in heaven.

5. If immediate and resolute measures be not taken for our recovery from these declensions, they will spread farther,

and reach the acts of ſocial worſhip. You will feel the effect in your families, and in public ordinances. And if you do not feel it, the ſymptoms will be ſo much the worſe. Wandering thoughts will, as it were, eat out the very heart of theſe duties. It is not, I believe, the privilege of the moſt eminent Chriſtians to be entirely free from them; but, probably, in theſe circumſtances, you will find but few intervals of ſtrict attention, or of any thing which wears the appearance of inward devotion. And when theſe heartleſs duties are concluded, there will ſcarce be a reflection made how little God hath been enjoyed in them, how little he hath been honoured by them. Perhaps the ſacrament of the Lord's Supper, being ſo admirably adapted to fix the attention of the ſoul, and to excite its warmeſt exerciſe of holy affections, may be the laſt ordinance in which theſe declenſions will be felt. And yet who can ſay that the ſacred table is a privileged place? Having been unneceſſarily ſtraitened in your preparations, you will attend with leſs fixedneſs and enlargement of heart than uſual. And perhaps a diſſatisfaction in the review, when there has been a remarkable alienation or inſenſibility of mind, may occaſion a diſpoſition to forſake your place and your duty there. And when your ſpiritual enemies have once gained this point upon you, it is probable you will fall by ſwifter degrees than ever, and your reſiſtance to their attempts will grow weaker and weaker.

6. When your love to God our Father, and to the Lord Jeſus Chriſt fails, your fervour of Chriſtian affection to your brethren in Chriſt will proportionably decline, and your concern for uſefulneſs in life abate; eſpecially, where any thing is to be done for ſpiritual edification. You will find one excuſe or another for the neglect of religious diſcourſe, perhaps not only among neighbours and Chriſtian friends, when very convenient opportunities offer, but even with regard to thoſe who are members of your own families, and to thoſe who, if you are fixed in the ſuperior relations of life, are committed to your care.

7. With this remiſſneſs, an attachment either to ſenſual pleaſures or to worldly buſineſs will increaſe. For the ſoul muſt have ſomething to employ it, and ſomething to delight itſelf in; and as it turns to one or the other of theſe, temptations of one ſort or another will preſent themſelves. In

ſome inſtances, perhaps, the ſtricteſt bonds of temperance, and the regular appointments of life, may be broken in upon through a fondneſs for company, and the entertainments which often attend it. In other inſtances, the intereſts of life appearing greater than they did before, and taking up more of the mind, contrary intereſts of other perſons may throw you into diſquietude, or plunge you in debate and contention; in which it is extremely difficult to preſerve either the ſerenity or the innocence of the ſoul. And perhaps if miniſters and other Chriſtian friends obſerve this, and endeavour, in a plain and faithful way, to reduce you from your wandering, a falſe delicacy of mind, often contracted in ſuch a ſtate as this, will render theſe attempts extremely diſagreeable. The ulcer of the ſoul (if I may be allowed the expreſſion) will not bear being touched when it moſt needs it; and one of the moſt generous and ſelf-denying inſtances of Chriſtian friendſhip, ſhall be turned into an occaſion of coldneſs and diſtate, yea, perhaps of enmity.

8. And poſſibly, to ſum up all, this diſordered ſtate of mind may lead you into ſome prejudices againſt thoſe very principles which might be moſt effectual for your recovery; and your great enemy may ſucceed ſo far in his attempts againſt you, as to perſuade you that you have loſt nothing in religion, when you have almoſt loſt all. He may, very probably, lead you to conclude, that your former devotional frames were mere fits of enthuſiaſm; and that the holy regularity of your walk before God, was an unneceſſay ſtrictneſs and ſcrupuloſity. Nay, you may think it a great improvement in underſtanding, that you have learnt from ſome new maſters, that if a man treat his fellow-creatures with humanity and good nature, judging and reviling only thoſe who would diſturb others by the narrowneſs of their notions (for theſe are generally exempted from other objects of the moſt univerſal and diſintereſted benevolence ſo often boaſted of) he muſt neceſſarily be in a very good ſtate, though he pretend not to converſe much with God, provided that he think reſpectfully of him, and do not provoke him by any groſs immoralities.

9. I mention this in the laſt ſtage of religious declenſions, becauſe I apprehend that to be its proper place; and I fear it will be found by experience to ſtand upon the very confines of that groſs apoſtaſy into deleberate and preſump-

tuous ſin, which will claim our conſideration under the next head; and becauſe, too, it is that ſymptom which moſt effectually tends to prevent the ſucceſs, and even the uſe of any proper remedies, in conſequence of a fond and fatal apprehenſion that they are needleſs. It is, if I may borrow the ſimile, like thoſe fits of lethargic drowſineſs, which often precede apoplexies and death.

10. It is by no means my deſign at this time to reckon up, much leſs to conſider at large, thoſe dangerous principles which are now ready to poſſeſs the mind, and to lay the foundation of a falſe and treacherous peace. Indeed they are in different inſtances various, and ſometimes run into oppoſite extremes; but if God awaken you to read your Bible with attention, and give you to feel the ſpirit with which it is written, almoſt every page will flaſh in conviction upon the mind, and ſpread a light to ſcatter and diſperſe theſe ſhades of darkneſs.

11. What I chiefly intend in this addreſs is to engage you, if poſſible, as ſoon as you perceive the firſt ſymptoms of theſe declenſions, to be upon your guard, and to endeavour as ſpeedily as poſſible to recover yourſelf from them. And I would remind you that the remedy muſt begin where the firſt cauſe of complaint prevailed, I mean in the cloſet. Take ſome time for recollection, and aſk your own conſcience ſeriouſly, How matters ſtand between the bleſſed God and your ſoul? Whether they are as they once were, and as you could wiſh them to be, if you ſaw your life juſt drawing to a period, and were to paſs immediately into the eternal ſtate? One ſerious thought of eternity ſhames a thouſand vain excuſes, with which, in the forgetfulneſs of it, we are ready to delude our own ſouls. And when you feel that ſecret miſgiving of heart, which will naturally ariſe on this occaſion, do not endeavour to palliate the matter, and to find out ſlight and artful coverings for what you cannot forbear ſecretly condemning; but honeſtly fall under the conviction, and be humbled for it. Pour out your heart before God, and ſeek the renewed influences of his Spirit and grace. Return with more exactneſs to ſecret devotion, and to ſelf-examination. Read the ſcripture with yet greater diligence, and eſpecially the more devotional and ſpiritual parts of it. Labour to ground it in your heart, and to feel what you have reaſon to believe the

facred penmen felt when they wrote, fo far as circumftances may agree.—Open your foul with all fimplicity to every leffon which the word of God would teach you; and guard againft thofe things which you perceive to alienate your mind from inward religion, though there be nothing criminal in the things themfelves. They may, perhaps, in the general, be lawful; to fome, poffibly, they may be expedient; but if they produce fuch an effect, as was mentioned above, it is certain they are not convenient for you. In thefe circumftances, above all, feek the converfe of thofe Chriftians whofe progrefs in religion feems moft remarkable, and who adorn their profeffion in the moft amiable manner. Labour to obtain their temper and fentiments, and lay open your cafe and your heart to them with all the freedom which prudence will permit. Employ yourfelf at feafons of leifure in reading practical and devotional books, in which the mind and the heart of the pious author is tranffufed into the work, and in which you can as it were tafte the genuine fpirit of Chriftianity. And, to conclude, take the firft opportunity that prefents itfelf of making an approach to the table of the Lord, and fpare neither time nor pains in the moft ferious preparation for it. There renew your covenant with God; put your foul anew into the hand of Chrift, and endeavour to view the wonders of his dying love in fuch a manner as may rekindle the languifhing flame, and quicken you to more vigorous refolutions than ever, *to live unto him who died for you.* And watch over your own heart, that the good impreffions you then felt may continue. Reft not till you have obtained as confirmed a ftate in religion as you ever knew. Reft not till you have made a greater progrefs than before; for it is certain more is yet behind; and it is only by a certain zeal to go forward, that you can be fecure from the danger of going backward, and of revolting more and more.

12. I only add, that it is neceffary to take thefe precautions as foon as poffible; or you will probably find a much fwifter progrefs than you are aware in the down hill road; and you may poffibly be left of God to fall into fome grofs and aggravated fin, fo as to fill your confcience with an agony and horror, which the pain of broken bones can but imperfectly expreſs.

A Prayer for one under Spiritual Decays.

ETERNAL and unchangeable Jehovah! Thy perfections and glories are like thy being, immutable; Jesus thy Son is *the same yesterday, to day, and forever*. The eternal world to which I am hastening is always equally important, and presses upon the attentive mind for a more fixed and solemn regard, in proportion to the degree in which it comes nearer and nearer. But, alas! my views and my affections and my best resolutions, are continually varying, like this poor body, which goes through daily and hourly alterations in its state and circumstances. Whence, O Lord, whence this sad change, which I now experience, in the frame and temper of my mind towards thee? Whence this alienation of my soul from thee? Why can I not come to thee with all the endearments of filial love as I once could? Why is thy service so remissly attended, if attended at all? And why are the exercises of it, which were once my greatest pleasure, become a burden to me? *Where, O God, is the blessedness I once spake of*, when my joy in thee as my heavenly Father was so conspicuous, that strangers might have observed it; and when my heart did so overflow with love to thee, and with zeal to thy service, that it was matter of self-denial to me to limit and restrain the genuine expressions of those strong emotions of my soul, even where prudence and duty required it?

Alas, Lord, whither am I fallen? Thine eye sees me still; but O, how unlike what it once saw me! Cold and insensible as I am, I must blush on the reflection. Thou *seest me in secret*, and seest me, perhaps, often amusing myself with trifles in those seasons which I used solemnly to devote to thine immediate service. Thou seest me coming into thy presence as by constraint; and when I am before thee, so straitened in my spirit, that I hardly know what to say to thee, though thou art the God with whom I have to do, and though the keeping up an humble and dutiful correspondence with thee, is beyond all comparison the most important business of my life. And even when I am speaking to thee, with how much coldness and formality is it? It is perhaps the work of the imagination, the labour of the lips; but where are those ardent desires, those intense

breathings after God, which I once felt?—Where is that pleasing repose in thee which I was once conscious of, as being near my divine rest, as being happy in that nearness, and resolving that, if possible, I would no more be removed from it? But O, how far am I now removed! When these short devotions, if they may be called devotions, are over, in what long intervals do I forget thee, and appear so little animated with thy love, so little devoted to thy service, that a stranger might converse with me a considerable time without knowing that I had ever formed any acquaintance with thee, without discovering that I had so much as known or heard any thing of God! Thou callest me to thine house, O Lord, on thine own day, but how heartless are my services there! I offer thee no more than a carcass. My thoughts and affections are engrossed with other objects, while I *draw near thee with my mouth, and honour thee with my lips.* Thou callest me to thy table; but my heart is so frozen that it hardly melts even at the foot of the cross; hardly feels any efficacy in the blood of Jesus. O wretched creature that I am; unworthy of being called thine! Unworthy of a place among thy children, or of the meanest situation in thy family; rather worthy to be cast out, to be forsaken, yea, to be utterly destroyed!

Is this, Lord, the service which I once promised, and which thou hast so many thousand reasons to expect? Are these the returns I am making for thy daily providential care, for the sacrifice of thy Son, for the communications of thy Spirit, for the pardon of my numberless, aggravated sins, for the hopes, the undeserved and so often forfeited hopes of eternal glory? Lord, I am ashamed to stand or to kneel before thee. But pity me, I beseech thee, and help me; for I am a pitiable object indeed! *My soul cleaveth unto the dust*, and lays itself in the dust before thee! But O, *quicken me according to thy word;* let me trifle no longer, for I am upon the brink of a precipice! I am *thinking of my ways;* O give me grace to *turn my feet unto thy testimonies; to make haste without any farther delay, that I may keep thy commandments! Search me, O Lord, and try me!* Go to the first root of this distemper which spreads itself over my soul, and recover me from it! Represent sin unto me, O Lord, I beseech thee, that I may see it with abhorrence! and represent the Lord Jesus Christ to me in such

a light, that I may *look upon him and mourn*, that I may look upon him and love! May I awaken from this ſtupid lethargy into which I am ſinking; and may Chriſt give me more abundant degrees of ſpiritual life and activity than I ever yet received! And may I be ſo quickened and animated by him, that I may more than recover the ground I have loſt, and may make a more ſpeedy and exemplary progreſs than in my beſt days I have ever yet done! Send down upon me, O Lord, in a more rich and abundant effuſion, thy good Spirit! May he dwell in me, as in a temple which he has conſecrated to himſelf; and while all the ſervice is directed and governed by him, may holy and acceptable ſacrifices be continually offered! May the incenſe be conſtant, and may it be fragrant! May the ſacred fire burn and blaze perpetually; and may none of its veſſels ever be profaned, by being employed to an unholy or forbidden uſe!—*Amen.*

CHAP. XXIII.

The Caſe of a Relapſe into known and deliberate Sin, after ſolemn Acts of Dedication to God, and ſome Progreſs made in Religion.

Unthought of relapses may happen, 1. and bring the soul into a miserable case, 2. Yet the case is not desperate, 3. The backslider urged immediately to return; (1.) By deep humiliation before God for so aggravated an offence, 4. (2.) By renewed regards to the divine mercy in Christ, 5. (3.) By an open profession of repentance where the crime hath given public offence, 6. (4.) Falls to be reviewed for future caution, 7. The chapter concludes, 8. with a prayer for the use of one who hath fallen into gross sins after religious resolutions and engagements.

1. THE declenſions which I have deſcribed in the foregoing chapter muſt be acknowledged worthy of deep lamentation; but happy will you be, my dear reader, if you never know, by experience, a circumſtance yet more melancholy than this. Perhaps, when you conſider the views of things which you now have, you imagine that no conſiderations can ever bribe you, in any ſingle inſtance, to act contrary to the preſent dictates or ſuggeſtions of your con-

ſcience, and of the Spirit of God as ſetting it on work. No; you think it would be better for you to die. And you think rightly. But Peter thought and ſaid ſo too: *Though I ſhould die with thee, yet will I not deny thee;* and yet, after all, he fell; and therefore *be not high-minded, but fear.* It is not impoſſible but you may fall into that very ſin of which you imagine you are leaſt in danger, or into that againſt which you have moſt ſolemnly reſolved, and of which you have already moſt bitterly repented. You may relapſe into it again and again; but O, if you do, nay, if you ſhould deliberately and preſumptuouſly fall but once, how deep will it pierce your heart; how dear will you pay for all the pleaſure with which the temptation has been baited? How will this ſeparate between God and you? What a deſolation, what a dreadful deſolation will it ſpread over your ſoul! It is grievous to think of it. Perhaps in ſuch a ſtate, you may feel more agony and diſtreſs in your own conſcience, when you come ſeriouſly to reflect, than you ever felt when you were firſt awakened and reclaimed, becauſe the ſin will be attended with ſome very high aggravations beyond thoſe of your unregenerate ſtate. I well knew the perſon that ſaid, "The agonies of a ſinner in the firſt pangs of his repentance, were not to be mentioned on the ſame day with thoſe of *the backſlider in heart*, when he comes to be *filled with his own ways.*"

2. Indeed it is enough to wound one's heart to think how your's will be wounded: how all your comforts, all your evidences, all your hopes, will be clouded; what thick darkneſs will ſpread itſelf on every ſide, ſo that neither ſun, nor moon, nor ſtars will appear in your heaven. Your ſpiritual conſolations will be gone; and your temporal enjoyments will alſo be rendered taſteleſs and inſipid. And if afflictions be ſent, as they probably may, in order to reclaim you, a conſciouſneſs of guilt will ſharpen and envenom the dart. Then will the enemy of your ſoul, with all his art and power, riſe up againſt you, encouraged by your fall, and labour to trample you down in utter hopeleſs ruin. He will perſuade you that you are already undone beyond recovery; he will ſuggeſt that it ſignifies nothing to attempt it any more: for that every effort, every amendment, every act of repentance will but

make your cafe fo much the worfe, and plunge you lower and lower into hell.

3. Thus will he endeavour by terrors to keep you from that fure remedy which yet remains. But yield not to him. Your cafe will indeed be fad; and if it be now your cafe, it is deplorably fo; and to reft in it would be ftill much worfe. Your heart would be hardened yet more and more; and nothing could be expected but fudden and aggravated deftruction. Yet, bleffed be God, it is not quite hopelefs. *Your wounds are corrupted, becaufe of your foolifhnefs;* but the gangrene is not incurable. *There is balm in Gilead, there is a Phyfician there.* Do not, therefore, render your condition hopelefs, by now faying, *There is no hope,* and drawing a fatal argument from that falfe fuppofition for going after the idols you have loved. Let me addrefs you in the language of God to his backfliding people when they were ready to apprehend that to be their cafe, and to draw fuch a conclufion from it! *Only return unto me, faith the Lord.* Cry for renewed grace; and in the ftrength of it, labour to return. Cry with David under the like guilt, *I have gone aftray like a loft fheep, feek thy fervant; for I do not forget thy commandments;* and that remembrance of them is, I hope, a token for good. But if thou wilt return at all, do it immediately. Take not one ftep more in that fatal path to which thou haft turned afide. Think not to add one fin more to the account, and then to repent; as if it would be but the fame thing on the whole. The fecond error may be worfe than the firft; it may make way for another and another, and draw on a terrible train of confequences, beyond all you can now imagine. Make hafte, therefore, and do not delay. Efcape, and fly as for thy life, before *the dart ftrike through thy liver.—Give not fleep to thine eyes, nor flumber to thine eyelids;* lie not down upon thy bed under unpardoned guilt, leaft evil overtake thee, leaft the fword of divine juftice fhould fmite thee; and whilft thou propofeft to return to-morrow, thou fhouldft this night go and take poffeffion of hell.

4. Return immediately; and permit me to add, return folemnly. Some very pious and excellent divines have expreffed themfelves upon this head in a manner which feems liable to dangerous abufe, when they urge men after a fall "not to ftay to furvey the ground, nor confider how they

came to be thrown down, but immediately to get up and renew the race."—In ſlighter caſes, the advice is good; but when conſcience has ſuffered ſuch violent outrage by the commiſſion of known, wilful and deliberate ſin (a caſe which one would hope ſhould but ſeldom happen to thoſe who have once ſincerely entered on a religous courſe) I can by no means think, that either reaſon or ſcripture encourage ſuch a method. Eſpecially would it be improper, if the action itſelf has been of ſo heinous a nature, that even to have fallen into it on the moſt ſudden ſurpriſe of temptation, muſt greatly have aſhamed, and terrified, and diſtreſſed the ſoul. Such an affair is dreadfully ſolemn, and ſhould be treated accordingly. If this has been the ſad caſe with you, my then unhappy reader, I would pity you and mourn over you, and would beſeech you as you tender your peace, your recovery, the health and the very life of your ſoul, that you would not loiter away an hour. Retire immediately for ſerious reflection. Break through other engagements, and employments, unleſs they be ſuch as you cannot in conſcience delay for a few hours, which can ſeldom happen in the circumſtance I now ſuppoſe. This is the one thing needful. Set yourſelf to it, therefore, as in the preſence of God, and hear at large, patiently and humbly, what conſcience has to ſay, though it chide and reproach ſeverely. Yea, earneſtly pray, that God would ſpeak to you by conſcience, and make you more thoroughly to know and feel *what an evil and bitter thing it is that you have thus forſaken him.* Think of all the aggravating circumſtances attending your offence, and eſpecially thoſe which ariſe from abuſed mercy and goodneſs; which ariſe not only from your ſolemn vows and engagements to God, but from the views you have had of a Redeemer's love, ſealed even in blood. And are theſe the returns? Was it not enough that Chriſt ſhould have been thus injured by his enemies? Muſt he be *wounded in the houſe of his friends* too? Were you *delivered to work ſuch abominations as theſe?* Did the bleſſed Jeſus groan and die for you, that you might ſin with boldneſs and freedom, that you might extract, as it were, the very ſpirit and eſſence of ſin, and offend God to a height of ingratitude and baſeneſs which would otherwiſe have been in the nature of things impoſſible! O, think how juſtly God might caſt you out from his preſence! How juſtly he

might number you among the moſt ſignal inſtances of his vengeance! And think how "your heart would endure, or your hands be ſtrong, if *he would deal thus with you!*" Alas! all your former experiences would enhance your ſenſe of the ruin and miſery that muſt be felt in an eternal baniſhment from the divine preſence and favour.

5. Indulge ſuch reflections as theſe. Stand the humbling ſight of your ſins in ſuch a view as this. The more odious and more painful it appears, the greater proſpect there will be of your benefit by attending to it. But the matter is not to reſt here. All theſe reflections are intended not to grieve, but to cure; and to grieve no more than will promote the cure. You are indeed to look upon ſin; but you are alſo, in ſuch a circumſtance, if ever, to look upon Chriſt: to *look upon him whom you have now pierced* deeper than before, and to *mourn for him with ſincerity and tenderneſs*. The God whom you have injured and affronted, whoſe laws you have broken, and whoſe juſtice you have, as it were, challenged by this fooliſh, wretched apoſtaſy, is nevertheleſs *a moſt merciful God*. You cannot be ſo ready to return to him, as he is ready to receive you. Even now does he ſolicit a reconciliation by thoſe tender impreſſions which he is making upon your heart. But remember how he will be reconciled. It is in the very ſame way in which you made your firſt approaches to him; in the name and for the ſake of his dear Son. Come, therefore, in an humble dependence upon him. Renew your application to Jeſus, that his blood may be ſprinkled upon your ſoul, that your ſoul may thereby be purified, and your guilt removed. This very ſin of your's, which the bleſſed God foreſaw, increaſed the weight of your Redeemer's ſufferings; it was concerned in ſhedding his blood. Humbly go, and place your wounds under the droppings of that precious balm by which alone they can be healed. That compaſſionate Saviour will delight to reſtore you, when you lie as an humble ſupplicant at his feet, and will graciouſly take part with you in that peace and pleaſure which he gives. Through him, renew your covenant with God, that broken covenant, the breach of which divine juſtice might teach you to know *by terrible things in righteouſneſs;* but mercy allows of an accommodation. Let the conſciouſneſs and remembrance of the breach engage you to enter into covenant anew, un-

der a deeper ſenſe than ever of your own weakneſs, and a more cordial dependence on divine grace for your ſecurity, than you have ever yet entertained. I know you will be aſhamed to preſent yourſelf among the children of God in his ſanctuary, and eſpecially at his table, under a conſciouſneſs of ſo much guilt; but break through that ſhame, if Providence open you the way. You ſhould be humbled before your offended Father; but ſurely there is no place where you are more like to be humbled, than when you ſee yourſelf in his houſe, and no ordinance adminiſtered there can lay you lower than that in which *Chriſt is evidently ſet forth as crucified before your eyes*. Sinners are the only perſons who have buſineſs there; the beſt of men come to that ſacred table as ſinners; as ſuch, make your approach to it; yea, as the greateſt of ſinners; as one who needs the blood of Jeſus as much as any creature upon earth.

6. And let me remind you of one thing more; if your fall has been of ſuch a nature as to give any ſcandal to others, be not at all concerned to ſave appearances, and to moderate thoſe mortifications which deep humiliations before them would occaſion. The depth and pain of that mortification is indeed an excellent medicine, which God has in his wiſe goodneſs appointed for you in ſuch circumſtances as theſe. In ſuch a caſe, confeſs your fault with the greateſt frankneſs; aggravate it to the utmoſt; entreat pardon and prayer from thoſe whom you have offended. Then, and never till then, you will be in the way to peace; not by palliating a fault, not by making vain excuſes, not by objecting to the manner in which others may have treated you; as if the leaſt exceſs of rigour, in a faithful admonition, were a crime equal to ſome great immorality that occaſioned it. This can only proceed from the madneſs of pride and ſelf-love; it is the ſenſibility of a wound which is hardened, ſwelled, and inflamed! and it muſt be reduced and cooled, and ſuppled, before it can poſſibly be cured. To be cenſured and condemned by men, will be but a little grievance to a ſoul thoroughly humbled and broken under a ſenſe of having incurred the condemning ſentence of God. Such a one will rather deſire to glorify God, by ſubmitting to deſerved blame; and will fear deceiving others into a more favourable opinion of him than he inwardly

knows himself to deserve. These are the sentiments which God gives to the sincere penitent in such a case; and by this means he restores him to that credit and regard among others which he does not know how to seek; but which, nevertheless, for the sake both of his comfort and usefulness, God wills that he should have; and which it is, humanly speaking, impossible for him to recover any other way. But there is something so honourable in the frank acknowledgment of a fault, and in deep humiliation for it, that all who see it must needs approve it. They pity an offender who is brought to such a disposition, and endeavour to comfort him with returning expressions, not only of their love, but of their esteem too.

7. Excuse this digression, which may suit some cases, and which would suit many more, if a regular discipline were to be exercised in churches; for on such a supposition, the Lord's supper could not be approached after visible and scandalous falls, without solemn confession of the offence and declarations of repentance. On the other hand, there may be instances of sad apostasy, where the crime, though highly aggravated before God, may not fall under human notice. In this case remember, that your business is with him to whose piercing eye every thing appears in its just light; before him, therefore, prostrate your souls, and seek a solemn reconciliation with him, confirmed by the memorials of his dying Son. And when this is done, imagine not, that because you have received the tokens of pardon, the guilt of your apostasy is to be forgotten at once. Bear it still in your memory for future caution; lament it before God, in the frequent returns of secret devotion especially; and view with humiliation the scars of those wounds which your own folly occasioned, even when by divine grace they are thoroughly healed. For God establishes his covenant, not to remove the sense of every past abomination, but *that thou mayest remember thy ways, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame, even when I am pacified towards thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord.*

8. And now, upon the whole, if you desire to attain such a temper, and to return by such steps as these, then immediately fall down before God, and pour out your heart in his presence, in language like this.

A Prayer for one who has fallen into groſs Sin, after religous Reſolutes and Engagements.

O MOST holy, holy, holy Lord God! when I ſeriouſly reflect on thy ſpotleſs purity, and on the ſtrict and impartial methods of thy ſteady adminiſtration, together with that almighty power of thine, which is able to carry every thought of thine heart into immediate and full execution, I may juſtly appear before thee this day with ſhame and terror, in confuſion and conſternation of ſpirit. This day, O my God, this dark, mournful day, would I take occaſion to look back to that ſad ſource of our guilt and our miſery, the apoſtaſy of our common parents, and ſay, with thine offending ſervant David, *Behold I was ſhapen in iniquity, and in ſin did my mother conceive me.* This day would I lament all the fatal conſequences of ſuch a deſcent with regard to myſelf. And O, how many have they been! The remembrance of the ſins of my unconverted ſtate, and the failings and infirmities of my after life, may juſtly confound me! How much more ſuch a ſcene as now lies before my conſcience and before thine all-ſeeing eye? For *thou, O Lord, knoweſt my fooliſhneſs, and my ſins are not hid from thee. Thou telleſt all my wanderings from thy ſtatutes;* thou ſeeſt, and thou recordeſt every inſtance of my diſobedience to thee and of my rebellion againſt thee; thou ſeeſt it in every aggravated circumſtance which I can diſcern, and in many more, which I have never obſerved or reflected upon. How then ſhall I *appear in thy preſence, or lift up my face to thee! I am full of confuſion,* and feel a ſecret regret in the thought of applying to thee; but, *O Lord, to whom ſhould I go but unto thee?* unto thee, on whom depends my life or my death; unto thee, who alone canſt take away that burden of guilt which now preſſes me down to the duſt; who alone canſt reſtore to my ſoul that reſt and peace which I have loſt, and which I deſerve forever to loſe!

Behold me, O Lord God, falling down at thy feet! Behold me, pleading guilty in thy preſence, and ſurrendering myſelf to that juſtice which I cannot eſcape! I have not one word to offer in my own vindication, in my own excuſe. Words, far from being able to clear up my innocence, can

never sufficiently describe the enormity and demerit of my sin. Thou, O Lord, and thou only, knowest to the full how heinous and how aggravated it is. Thine infinite understanding alone can fathom the infinite depths of its malignity. I am, on many accounts, most unable to do it. I cannot conceive the glory of thy sacred majesty, whose authority I have despised, nor the number and variety of those mercies which I have sinned against. I cannot conceive the value of the blood of thy dear Son, which I have ungratefully trampled under my feet; nor the dignity of that blessed Spirit of thine, whose agency I have, as far as I could, been endeavouring to oppose, and whose work I have been as with all my might, labouring to undo, and to tear up, as it were, that plantation of his grace, which I should rather have been willing to have guarded with my life, and watered with my blood. O, the baseness and madness of my conduct! that I should thus rend open the wounds of my soul, of which I had died long ere this, had not thine own hand applied a remedy, had not thine only Son bled to prepare it! That I should violate the covenant that I have *made with thee by sacrifice*, by the memorials of such a sacrifice, too, even of Jesus Christ my Lord, whereby I am become *guilty of his body and blood*. That I should bring such dishonour upon religion too, by so unsuitable a walk, and perhaps open the mouths of its greatest enemies to insult it upon my account, and prejudice some against it to their everlasting destruction.

I wonder, O Lord God, that I am here to own all this. I wonder that thou hast not long ago appeared *as a swift witness against me*; that thou hast not discharged the thunderbolts of thy flaming wrath against me, and crushed me into hell; making me there a terror to all about me, as well as to myself, by a vengeance and ruin, to be distinguished even there, where all are miserable, and all hopeless.

O God, thy patience is marvellous! But how much more marvellous is thy grace, which, after all this, invites me to thee! While I am here giving judgment against myself that I deserve to die, to die forever, thou art sending me the words of everlasting life, and calling me, as a backsliding child, to return unto thee. Behold, therefore, O Lord, invited by thy word, and encouraged by thy grace, I come; and, great as my transgressions are, I hum-

bly beſeech thee freely to pardon them; becauſe I know, that though my *ſins have reached unto heaven*, and *are lifted up even to the ſkies, thy mercy, O Lord, is above the heavens.* Extend thy mercy to me, O heavenly Father; and diſplay, in this illuſtrious inſtance, the riches of thy grace, and the prevalency of thy Son's blood! For ſurely, if ſuch crimſon ſins as mine may be made *white as ſnow and as wool*, and if ſuch a revolter as I am be brought to eternal glory, earth muſt, ſo far as it is known, be filled with wonder, and heaven with praiſe, and the greateſt ſinner may cheerfully apply for pardon, if I, the chief of ſinners, find it. And O, that when I have lain mourning, and as it were, bleeding at thy feet, as long as thou thinkeſt proper, thou wouldſt at length heal this ſoul of mine which hath ſinned againſt thee; and *give me beauty for aſhes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praiſe for the ſpirit of heavineſs!* O that thou wouldſt at length *reſtore unto me the joy of thy ſalvation, and make me to hear the ſongs of gladneſs, that the bones which thou haſt broken may yet rejoice.* Then, when a ſenſe of thy forgiving love is ſhed abroad upon my heart, and it is cheered with the voice of pardon, I will proclaim thy grace to others; *I will teach tranſgreſſors thy ways, and ſinners ſhall be converted unto thee:* thoſe that have been backſliding from thee ſhall be encouraged to ſeek thee by my happy experience, which I ſhall gladly proclaim for thy glory, though it be to my own ſhame and confuſion of face. And may this *joy of the Lord be my ſtrength*, ſo that in it I may ſerve thee henceforward with a vigour and zeal far beyond what I have hitherto known!

This I would aſk, with all humble ſubmiſſion to thy will; for I preſume not to inſiſt upon it. If thou ſhould ſee fit to make me a warning to others, by appointing that I ſhould walk all my days in darkneſs, and at laſt die under a cloud, *thy will be done.* But, O God, extend mercy for thy Son's ſake, to this ſinful ſoul at laſt; and give me ſome place, though it were at the feet of all thine other ſervants, in the regions of glory! O bring me at length, though it ſhould be through the gloomieſt valley that any have ever paſſed, into that bleſſed world where I ſhall depart from God no more, where I ſhall wound my own conſcience and diſhonour thy holy name no more! Then ſhall my tongue be

looſed, how long ſoever it might here be bound under the confuſion of guilt; and immortal praiſes ſhall be paid to that victorious blood, which has redeemed ſuch an infamous ſlave of ſin, as I muſt acknowledge myſelf to be, and brought me, from returns into bondage and repeated pollution, to ſhare the dignity and holineſs of thoſe who are kings and prieſts unto God.—*Amen.*

CHAP. XXIV.

The Caſe of the Chriſtian under the Hidings of God's Face.

The phraſe ſcriptural, 1. It ſignifies the withdrawing the tokens of the divine favour, 2. chiefly as to ſpiritual conſiderations, 3. This may become the caſe of any Chriſtian, 4. and will be found a very ſorrowful one, 5. The following directions, therefore, are given to thoſe who ſuppoſe it to be their own:—I. To inquire whether it be indeed a caſe of ſpiritual diſtreſs, or whether a diſconſolate frame may not proceed from indiſpoſition of body, 6. or difficulties as to worldly circumſtances, 7. If it be found to be indeed ſuch as the title of the chapter propoſes, be adviſed. II. To conſider it as a merciful diſpenſation of God, to awaken and beſtir the ſoul, and to excite it to a ſtrict examination of conſcience, and reformation of what has been amiſs, 8. 9. III. To be humble and patient while the trial continues, 10. IV. To go on ſteadily in the way of duty, 11. V. To renew a believing application to the blood of Jeſus, 12 An humble ſupplication for one under theſe mournful exerciſes of mind, when they are found to proceed from the ſpiritual cauſe ſuppoſed.

1. THERE is a caſe, which often occurs in the Chriſtian life, which they, who accuſtom themſelves much to the exerciſe of devotion, have been uſed to call *the hidings of God's face.* It is a phraſe borrowed from the word of God, which I hope may ſhelter it from contempt at the firſt hearing. It will be my buſineſs in this chapter to ſtate it as plainly as I can, and then to give ſome advices as to your own conduct when you fall into it, as it is very probable you may, before you have finiſhed your journey through this wilderneſs.

2. The meaning of it may partly be underſtood by the oppoſite phraſe, of *God's cauſing his face to ſhine* upon a perſon, or *lifting upon him the light of his countenance.* This ſeems

to carry in it an alluſion to the pleaſant and delightful appearance which the face of a friend has, and eſpecially if in a ſuperior relation of life, when he converſes with thoſe whom he loves and delights in. Thus Job, when ſpeaking of the regard paid him by his attendants, ſays, *If I ſmiled upon them, they believed it not, and the light of my countenance they caſt not down;* that is, they were careful, in ſuch an agreeable circumſtance, to do nothing to diſpleaſe me, or (as we ſpeak) to cloud my brow. And David, when expreſſing his deſire of the manifeſtation of God's favour to him, ſays, *Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me;* and as the effect of it, declares, *thou haſt put gladneſs in my heart, more than if corn and wine increaſed.* Nor is it impoſſible, that, in this phraſe, as uſed by David, there may be ſome alluſion to the bright ſhining forth of the Shechinah, that is, the luſtre which dwelt in the cloud as the viſible ſign of the divine preſence with Iſrael, which God pleaſed peculiarly to manifeſt upon ſome public occaſions, as a token of his favour and acceptance. On the other hand, therefore, for God to hide his face, muſt imply the withholding the tokens of his favour, and muſt be eſteemed a mark of his diſpleaſure. Thus Iſaiah uſes it; *Your iniquities have ſeparated between you and your God, and your ſins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.* And again, *Thou haſt hid thy face from us,* as not regarding the calamities we ſuffer, *and haſt conſumed us becauſe of our iniquities.* So likewiſe for God *to hide his face from our ſins,* ſignifies to overlook them, and to take no farther notice of them. The ſame idea is, at other times, expreſſed by *God's hiding his eyes* from perſons of a character diſagreeable to him, when they come to addreſs him with their petitions, not vouchſafing to look towards them. This is plainly the ſcriptural ſenſe of the word; and agreeably to this, it is generally uſed by Chriſtians in our day, and every thing which ſeems a token of divine diſpleaſure to them, is expreſſed by it.

3. It is farther to be obſerved here, that the things which they judge to be manifeſtations of divine favour toward them, or complacency in them, are not only, nor chiefly, of a temporal nature, or ſuch as merely relate to the bleſſings of this animal and periſhing life. David, though the promiſes of the law had a continual reference to ſuch, yet was taught to look farther, and deſcribes them as

preferable to, and therefore plainly distinct from, *the blessings of the corn-floor, or the wine-press.* And if you to whom I am now addressing, do not know them to be so, it is plain you are quite ignorant of the subject we are inquiring into, and indeed are yet to learn the first lessons of true religion. All that David says of *beholding the beauty of the Lord*, or being *satisfied as with marrow and fatness*, when he remembered him upon *his bed*, as well as *with the goodness of his house, even of his holy temple*, is to be taken in the same sense, and can need very little explication to the truly experienced soul. But those that have known the light of God's countenance, and the shinings of his face, will, in proportion to the degree of that knowledge, be able to form some notion of the hiding of his face, or the withdrawing of the tokens he has given his people of his presence and favour, which sometimes greatly embitters prosperity; as where the contrary is found, it sweetens affliction, and often swallows up the sense of it.

4. And give me leave to remind you, my Christian friend (for under that character I now address my reader) that to be thus deprived of the sense of God's love, and of the tokens of his favour, may soon be the case with you, though you may now have the pleasure to see *the candle of the Lord shining upon you*, or though it may even seem to be sunshine and high noon in your soul. You may lose your lively views of the divine perfections and glories, in the contemplation of which you now find that inward satisfaction. You may think of the divine wisdom and power, of the divine mercy and fidelity, as well as of his righteousness and holiness, and feel little inward complacency of soul in the view; it may be with respect to any lively impression, as if it were the contemplation merely of a common object. It may seem to you as if you had lost all idea to those important words, though the view had sometimes swallowed up your whole soul, in transports of admiration, astonishment, and love. You may lose your delightful sense of the divine favour. It may be matter of great doubt with you, whether you do indeed belong to God; and all the work of his blessed Spirit may be so veiled and shaded in the soul, that the peculiar characters by which the hand of that sacred agent might be distinguished, shall be in a great measure lost; and you may be ready to imagine you had only delud-

ed yourself in all the former hopes you have entertained. In consequence of this, those ordinances in which you now rejoice, may grow very uncomfortable to you, even when you do indeed desire communion with God in them. You may hear the most delightful evangelical truths opened, you may hear the privileges of God's children most affectionately represented, and not be aware that you have any part or lot in this matter; and from that coldness and insensibility, may be drawn a farther argument that you have nothing to do with them. And then your heart may meditate terror; and under the distress that overwhelms you, your dearest enjoyments may be reflected upon as adding to the weight of it, and making it more sensible, while you consider that you had once such a taste for these things, and have now lost it all. So that perhaps it may seem to you, that they who never felt any thing at all of religious impressions, are happier than you, or at least are less miserable. You may, perhaps, in these melancholy hours, even doubt whether you have ever prayed at all! and whether all that you called your enjoyments of God, were not some false delights, excited by the great enemy of souls, to make you apprehend that your state was good, that so you might continue his more secure prey.

5. Such as this may be your case for a considerable time; and ordinances may be attended in vain, and the presence of God may be in vain sought in them. You may pour out your soul in private, and then come to public worship, and find little satisfaction in either; but be forced to take up the Psalmist's complaint, *My God, I cry in the day time, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent;* or that of Job, *Behold I go forward, but he is not there, and backward, but I cannot perceive him; on the left hand where he doth work, but I cannot behold him; he hideth himself on the right hand that I cannot see him.* So that all which looked like religion in your mind shall seem to be melted into grief, or chilled into fear, or crushed into a deep sense of your own unworthiness; in consequence of which you shall not dare so much as to lift up your eyes before God, and be almost ashamed to take your place in a worshipping assembly among any that you think his servants. I have known this to be the case of some excellent Christians, whose improvements in religion have been distinguished,

and whom God hath honoured above many of their brethren in what he hath done for them, and by them. Give me leave, therefore, having thus described it, to offer you some plain advices with regard to it; and let not that be imputed to enthusiastic fancy, which proceeds from an intimate and frequent view of facts on the one hand, and from a sincere, affectionate desire on the other, to relieve the tender, pious heart in so desolate a state. At least, I am persuaded the attempt will not be overlooked or disapproved by *the great Shepherd of the sheep*, who hath charged us to *comfort the feeble minded*.

6. And here I would first advise you most carefully to inquire whether your present distress does indeed arise from causes which are truly spiritual; or whether it may not rather have its foundation in some disorder of body, or in the circumstances of life, in which you are providentially placed, which may break your spirits, and deject your mind?—The influence of the inferior part of our nature on the nobler, the immortal spirit, while we continue in this embodied state, is so evident, that no attentive person can, in general, fail to have observed it; and yet there are cases in which it seems not to be sufficiently considered; and perhaps your own may be one of them. The state of the body is often such as necessarily to suggest gloomy ideas even in dreams, and to indispose the soul for taking pleasure in any thing; and when it is so, why should it be imagined to proceed from any peculiar divine displeasure, if it does not find its usual delight in religion? Or why should God be thought to have departed from us, because he suffers natural causes to produce natural effects, without interposing by miracle to break the connexion? When this is the case, the help of the physician is to be sought rather than that of the divine, or, at least, by all means, together with it; and medicine, diet, exercise, and air, may in a few weeks effect that which the strongest reasonings, the most pathetic exhortations or consolations, might for many months have attempted in vain.

7. In other instances, the dejection and feebleness of the mind may arise from something uncomfortable in our worldly circumstances; these may cloud as well as distract the thoughts, and embitter the temper, and thus render us in a great degree unfit for religious services or pleasures;

and when it is so, the remedy is to be sought in submission to Divine Providence; in abstracting our affections, as far as possible, from the present world; in a prudent care to ease ourselves of the burden, so far as we can, by moderating unnecessary expenses, and by diligent application to business, in humble dependence on the divine blessing; in the mean time, endeavouring by faith to look up to him, who sometimes suffers his children to be brought into such difficulties, that he may endear himself more sensibly to them by the method he shall take for their relief.

8. On the principles here laid down, it may perhaps appear, on inquiry, that the distress complained of may have a foundation very different from what was at first supposed. But where the health is sound, and the circumstances easy; when the animal spirits are disposed for gaiety and entertainment, while all taste for religious pleasure is in a manner gone; when the soul is seized with a kind of lethargic insensibility, or what I had almost called, a paralytic weakness, with respect to every religious exercise, even though there should not be that deep, terrifying distress, or pungent amazement, which I before represented as the effect of melancholy; nor that anxiety about the accommodations of life, which strait circumstances naturally produce; I would in that case vary my advice, and urge you, with all possible attention and impartiality, to search into the cause which has brought upon you that great evil under which you justly mourn. And probably, in general, the cause is sin; some secret sin, which has not been discovered or observed by the eye of the world; for enormities that draw on them the observation and censure of others, will probably fall under the case mentioned in the former chapter, as they must be instances of known and deliberate guilt. Now, the eye of God hath seen these evils, which have escaped the notice of your fellow creatures; and, in consequence of this care to conceal them from others while you could not but know they were open to him, God has seen himself in a peculiar manner affronted and injured, I had almost said, insulted by them; and hence his righteous displeasure. O! let not that be forgotten which is so plainly said, so commonly known, so familiar to almost every religious ear, yet too little felt by any of our hearts—*Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from*

you, that he will not hear. And this is, on the whole, a merciful dispensation of God, though it may seem severe; regard it not, therefore, merely as your calamity, but as intended to awaken you, that you may not content yourself even with lying in tears of humiliation before the Lord, but, like Joshua, rise and exert yourself vigorously to put away from you that accursed thing, whatever it be. Let this be your immmediate and earnest care, that your pride may be humbled, that your watchfulness may be maintained, that your affections to the world may be deadened, and that, on the whole, your fitness for heaven may in every respect be increased.—These are the designs of your heavenly Father, and let it be your great concern to co-operate with them.

9. Receive it, therefore, on the whole, as the most important advice that can be given you, immediately to enter on a strict examination of your conscience. Attend to its gentlest whispers. If a suspicion arises in your mind that any thing has not been right, trace that suspicion, search into every secret folding of your heart; improve, to the purposes of a fuller discovery, the advices of your friends, the reproaches of your enemies: recollect for what your heart hath smitten you at the table of the Lord; for what it would smite you if you were upon a dying bed, and within this hour to enter on eternity. When you have made any discovery, note it down, and go on in your search till you can say, These are the remaining corruptions of my heart; these are the sins and follies of my life; this have I neglected; this have I done amiss.—And when the account is as complete as you can make it, set yourself, in the strength of God, to a strenuous reformation, or rather begin the reformation of every thing that seems amiss as soon as ever you discover it! *Return to the Almighty, and thou shalt be built up, and put away iniquity far from thy tabernacle; then shalt thou have thy delight in the Almighty, and shalt lift up thy face unto God. Thou shalt make thy prayer unto him, and he will hear thee; thou shalt pay thy vows unto him, and his light shall shine upon thy ways.*

10. In the mean time, be waiting for God with the deepest humility, and submit yourself to the discipline of your heavenly Father, acknowledging his justice, and hoping in his mercy; even when your conscience is least se-

vere in its remonſtrances, and diſcovers nothing more than the common infirmities of God's people; yet ſtill bow yourſelf down before him, and own, that ſo many are the evils of your beſt days, ſo many the imperfections of your beſt ſervices, that by them you have deſerved all, and more than all that you ſuffer;—not only that your ſun ſhould be clouded, but that it ſhould go down, and ariſe no more, but leave your ſoul in a ſtate of everlaſting darkneſs. And while the ſhade continues, be not impatient. Fret not yourſelf in any wiſe, but rather, with a holy calmneſs and gentleneſs of ſoul, *wait on the Lord.* Be willing to ſtay his time, willing to bear his frown, in humble hope that he will at length *return and have compaſſion on you. He has not utterly forgotten to be gracious, nor reſolved that he will be favourable no more. For the Lord will not caſt off forever; but though he cauſe grief, yet will he have compaſſion according to the multitude of his mercies.* It is comparatively but *for a ſmall moment that he hides his face from you; but you may humbly hope, that with greater mercies he will gather you, and that with everlaſting kindneſs he will have mercy on you.* Theſe ſuitable words are not mine, but his; and they wear this as in the very front of them, *That a ſoul under the hidings of God's face, may at leaſt be one whom he will gather, and to whom he will extend everlaſting favour.*

11. But while the darkneſs continues, "go on in the way of your duty." Continue the uſe of means and ordinances: read, and meditate: pray, yea, and ſing the praiſes of God too, though it may be with a heavy heart. Follow *the footſteps of his flock*, you may perhaps meet "the Shepherd of ſouls" in doing it. Place yourſelf in his way. It is poſſible you may by this mean get a kind look from him; and one look, one turn of thought which may happen in a moment, may as it were create a heaven in your ſoul at once. Go to the table of the Lord. If you cannot rejoice, go and mourn there. *Go and mourn that Saviour, whom by your ſins you have pierced;* go and lament the breaches of that covenant, which you have there ſo often confirmed. Chriſt may perhaps *make himſelf known unto you in the breaking of bread*, and you may find to your ſurpriſe that he hath been near you, when you imagined he was at the greateſt diſtance from you; near you when you thought you were caſt out from his preſence. Seek your

comfort in such enjoyments as these, and not in the vain amusements of this world, nor in the pleasures of sense. I shall never forget that affectionate expression, which I am well assured broke out from an eminently pious heart, then almost ready to break under sorrows of this kind: "Lord, if I may not enjoy thee, let me enjoy nothing else; but go down mourning after thee to the grave!" I wondered not to hear, that almost as soon as this sentiment had been breathed out before God in prayer, the burden was taken off, and the joy of God's salvation restored.

12. I shall add but one advice more, and that is "That you renew your application to the blood of Jesus, through whom the reconciliation between God and your soul has been accomplished." It is he that is our peace, and *by his blood it is that we are made nigh;* it is in him, *as the beloved of his soul*, that God declares *he is well pleased; and it is in him that we are made accepted, to the glory of his grace.* Go therefore, O Christian, and apply by faith to a crucified Saviour: go and apply to him as to a merciful High-Priest, *and pour out thy complaint before him, and show before him thy trouble.* Lay open the distress and anguish of thy soul to him, who once knew what it was to say (O astonishing! that he of all others should ever have said it) *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Look up for pity and relief to him, who himself suffered, being not only tempted, but with regard to sensible manifestations, deserted, that he might thus know how to pity those that are in such a melancholy case, and be ready, as well as *able to succour them.* He is *Immanuel, God with us;* and it is only in and through him that his Father shines forth upon us with the mildest beams of mercy and of love. Let it be therefore your immediate care to renew your acquaintance with him. Review the records of his life and death: hear his words: behold his actions; and when you do so, surely you will find a secret sweetness diffusing itself over your soul. You will be brought into a calm, gentle, silent frame, in which faith and love will operate powerfully, and God may probably *cause the still small voice of his comforting Spirit to be heard*, till your soul bursts out into a song of praise, and you may be *made glad, according to the days in which your have been afflicted.* In the mean time, such language as the following supplication speaks, may be suitable.

An humble Supplication for one under the Hidings of God's Face.

BLESSED GOD, *with thee is the fountain of life*, and of happineſs. I adore thy name, that I have ever taſted of thy ſtreams: that I have ever felt the peculiar pleaſure ariſing from the light of thy countenance, and the ſhedding abroad of thy love on the ſoul. But, alas! theſe delightful ſeaſons are now to me no more; and the *remembrance of them engages me to pour out my ſoul within me.* I would come as I have formerly done, and call thee, with the ſame endearment, my Father and my God: but, alas! I know not how to do it. Guilt and fear ariſe, and forbid the delightful language. I ſeek thee, O Lord, but I ſeek thee in vain. I would pray, and my lips are ſealed up. I would read thy word, and all the promiſes of it are veiled from mine eyes. I frequent thoſe ordinances, which have been formerly moſt nouriſhing and comfortable to my ſoul; but, alas! they are only the ſhadows of ordinances: the ſubſtance is gone: the animating ſpirit is fled, and leave them now at beſt but the image of what I once knew them.

But, Lord, *haſt thou caſt off forever, and wilt thou be favourable no more?* Haſt thou in awful judgment determined that my ſoul muſt be left to a perpetual winter, the ſad emblem of eternal darkneſs! Indeed I deſerve it ſhould be ſo. I acknowledge, O Lord, I deſerve to be caſt away from thy preſence with diſdain; to be ſunk lower than I am, much lower: I deſerve to have the *ſhadow of death upon mine eyelids*, and even to be ſurrounded with the thick gloom of the infernal priſon. But haſt thou not raiſed multitudes, who have deſerved, like me, *to be delivered into chains of darkneſs*, to the viſions of the glory above, where no cloud can ever interpoſe between thee and their rejoicing ſpirits? *Have mercy upon me, O Lord, have mercy upon me!* And though mine iniquities have now juſtly *cauſed thee to hide thy face from me*, yet be thou rather pleaſed, agreeably to the gracious language of thy word, to *hide thy face from my ſins, and to blot out all mine iniquities!* Cheer my heart with the tokens of thy *returning favour, and ſay unto my ſoul, I am thy ſalvation.*

Remember, O Lord God, remember that dreadful day, in which Jesus thy dear Son endured what my sins have deserved! Remember that agony, in which he poured out his soul before thee, and said, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Did he not, O Lord, endure all this, that humble penitents might through him be brought near unto thee, and might behold thee with pleasure, as their Father and their God? Thus do I desire to come unto thee, blessed Saviour! Art thou not appointed *to give unto them that mourn in Zion, beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness?* O wash away my tears, and anoint my head *with the oil of gladness, and clothe me with the garments of salvation.*

O *that I knew where I might find thee.* O that I knew what it is that has provoked thee to depart from me! I am *searching and trying my ways.* O that thou wouldst *search me and know my heart, try me, and know my thoughts, and if there be any wicked way in me, discover it, and lead me in the way everlasting;* in that way in which I find *rest and peace unto my soul,* and feel the discoveries of thy love in Christ!

O God, *who didst command the light to shine out of darkness,* speak but the word, and light shall dart into my soul at once! *Open thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth thy praise,* shall burst out into a cheerful song, which shall display before those whom my present dejections may have discouraged, the pleasures and supports of religion!

Yet, Lord, on the whole, I submit to thy will. If it is thus that my faith must be exercised, by walking in darkness for days, and months, and years to come, how long soever they may seem, how long soever they may be, I will submit. Still will I adore thee as *the God of Israel and the Saviour, though thou art a God that hidest thyself:* still will I trust *in the name of the Lord, and stay myself upon my God! trusting in thee, though thou slay me;* and *waiting for thee more than they that watch for the morning, yea, more than they that watch for the morning.* Peradventure *in the evening time it may be light.* I know that thou hast sometimes manifested thy compassions to thy dying servants, and given them, in the lowest ebb of their natural spirits, a full tide of divine glory, thus turning *darkness into light before them.* So may it please thee to gild the valley of the shadow of

death with the light of thy preſence, when I am paſſing through it, and to ſtretch forth *thy rod and thy ſtaff to comfort me*, that my tremblings may ceaſe, and the gloom may echo with ſongs of praiſe! But if it be thy ſovereign pleaſure that diſtreſs and darkneſs ſhould ſtill continue to the laſt motion of my pulſe, and the laſt gaſp of my breath, O, let it ceaſe with the parting ſtruggle, and bring me to that *light which is ſown for the righteous, and to that gladneſs which is reſerved for the upright in heart*; to the unclouded regions of everlaſting ſplendour and joy, where the full anointings of the Spirit ſhall be poured out on all thy people, and thou wilt no more *hide thy face from any of them!*

This, *Lord, is thy ſalvation for which I am waiting*; and whilſt I feel the deſires of my ſoul drawn out after it, I will never deſpair of obtaining it. Continue and increaſe thoſe deſires, and at length ſatisfy and exceed them all, *through the riches of thy grace in Chriſt Jeſus!—Amen.*

CHAP. XXV.

The Chriſtian ſtruggling under great and heavy Afflictions.

Here it is adviſed, (1.) That afflictions ſhould be expected, 1. (2.) That the righteous hand of God ſhould be acknowledged in them when they come, 2. (3.) That they ſhould be borne with patience, 3. (4.) That the divine conduct in them ſhould be cordially approved, 4. (5.) That thankfulneſs ſhould be maintained in the midſt of trials, 5. (6.) That the deſign of afflictions ſhould be diligently inquired into, and all proper aſſiſtance taken in diſcovering it, 6. (7.) That when it is diſcovered, it ſhould humbly be complied with and anſwered, 7. A prayer ſuited to ſuch a caſe.

1. SINCE *man is born unto trouble as the ſparks fly upward*, and Adam has entailed on all his race the ſad inheritance of calamity in their way to death, it will certainly be prudent and neceſſary that we ſhould all expect to meet with trials and afflictions; and that you, reader, whoever you are, ſhould be endeavouring to gird on your armour, and put yourſelf into a poſture to encounter thoſe

trials which will fall to your lot as a man and a Chriſtian. Prepare yourſelf to receive your afflictions, and to endure them, in a manner agreeable to both thoſe characters. In this view, when you ſee others under the burden, conſider how poſſible it is that you may be called out to the very ſame difficulties, or to others equal to them. Put your ſoul as in the place of theirs. Think how you could endure the load under which they lie; and endeavour at once to comfort them, and to ſtrengthen your own heart; or rather pray that God would do it. And obſerving how liable mortal life is to ſuch ſorrows, moderate your expectations from it; raiſe your thoughts above it, and form your ſchemes of happineſs only for that world where they cannot be diſappointed; in the mean time, bleſſing God, that your proſperity is lengthened out thus far, and aſcribing it to his ſpecial providence that you continue ſo long unwounded, when ſo many ſhowers of arrows are flying around you, and ſo many are falling by them on the right hand and on the left.

2. When at length your turn comes, as it certainly will, from the firſt hour in which an affliction ſeizes you, realize to yourſelf the hand of God in it, and loſe not the view of him in any ſecond cauſe which may have proved the immediate occaſion. Let it be your firſt care *to humble yourſelf under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.* Own that *he is juſt in all that is brought upon you,* and *that in all theſe things he puniſhes you leſs than your iniquities deſerve.* Compoſe yourſelf to bear his hand with patience, to glorify his name by a ſubmiſſion to his will, and to fall in with the gracious deſign of this viſitation, as well as to wait the iſſue of it quietly, whatever the event may be.

3. Now that *patience may have its perfect work,* reflect frequently and deeply upon your own meanneſs and ſinfulneſs. Conſider how often every mercy has been forfeited, and every judgment deſerved. And conſider too, how long the patience of God hath borne with you, and how wonderfully it is ſtill exerted towards you; and, indeed, not only his patience, but his bounty too. Afflicted as you are, for I ſpeak to you now as actually under the preſſure, look round and ſurvey your remaining mercies, and be gratefully ſenſible of them.—Make the ſup-

poſition of their being removed; what if God ſhould ſtretch out his hand againſt you, and add poverty to pain, or pain to poverty, or the loſs of friends to both; or the death of ſurviving friends to that of thoſe whom you are now mourning over; would not the wound be more grievous? Adore his goodneſs that this is not the caſe; and take heed, leſt your unthankfulneſs ſhould provoke him to multiply your ſorrows. Conſider alſo the need you have of diſcipline; how wholeſome it may prove to your ſoul, and what merciful deſigns our heavenly Father has in all the corrections he ſends upon his children.

4. Nay, I will add, that, in conſequence of all theſe conſiderations, it may well be expected, not only that you ſhould ſubmit to your afflictions, as what you cannot avoid, but that you ſhould ſweetly acquieſce in them, and approve them; that you ſhould not only juſtify, but glorify God in ſending them; that you ſhould glorify him with your heart, and with your lips too. Think not praiſe unſuitable on ſuch an occaſion; nor think that praiſe alone to be ſuitable which takes its riſe from remaining comforts; but know that it is your duty, not only to be thankful in your afflictions, but to be thankful on account of them.

5. God himſelf has ſaid, *in every thing give thanks*; and he has taught his ſervants to ſay, *Yea, alſo, we glory in tribulations*. And moſt certain it is, that to true believers they are inſtances of divine mercy; for *whom the Lord loveth, he chaſteneth; and ſcourgeth every ſon whom he receiveth* with peculiar and diſtinguiſhed endearment. View your preſent afflictions in this light as chaſtiſements of love; and then let your own heart ſay, whether love does not demand praiſe. Think with yourſelf, it is thus that God is making me conformable to his own Son; it is thus that he is training me up for complete glory. Thus he kills my corruptions; thus he ſtrengthens my graces; thus he is wiſely contriving to bring me nearer to himſelf, and to ripen me for the honours of his heavenly kingdom. It is *if need be, that I am in heavineſs*; and he ſurely knows what that need is better than I can pretend to teach him; and knows what peculiar propriety there is in this affliction to anſwer my preſent neceſſity, and do me that peculiar good which he is graciouſly intending me by it. *This tribulation ſhall work patience, and patience experience, and experience*

a more assured hope; even a hope which shall not make ashamed, while the love of God is shed abroad in my heart, and shines through my affliction, like the sun through a gently descending cloud, darting in light upon the shade, and mingling fruitfulness with weeping.

6. Let it be then your earnest care, while you thus look on your affliction, whatever it may be, as coming from the hand of God, to improve it to the purposes for which it was sent. And that you may so improve it, let it be your first concern to know what those purposes are. Summon up all the attention of your soul to *hear the rod of him who hath appointed it*; and pray earnestly that you may understand its voice. Examine your life, your words, and your heart; and pray that God would so guide your inquiries, that you may *return unto the Lord that smiteth you*. To assist you in this, call in the help of pious friends, and particularly of your ministers; entreat not only their prayers, but their advices too, as to the probable design of Providence; and encourage them freely to tell you any thing which occurs to their mind upon this head. And if such an occasion should lead them to touch upon some of the imperfections of your character and conduct, look upon it as a great token of their friendship, and take it not only patiently, but thankfully. It does but ill become a Christian at any time to resent reproofs and admonitions, and least of all does it become him when the rebukes of his heavenly Father are upon him; he ought rather to seek admonitions at such a time as this, and voluntarily to offer his wounds to be searched by a faithful and skilful hand.

7. And when, by one mean or another, you receive a ray of light to direct you in the meaning and language of such dispensations, take heed that you do not, in any degree, *harden yourself against God, and walk contrary to him*. Obstinate reluctance to the apprehended design of any providential stroke, is inexpressibly provoking to him. Set yourself, therefore, to an immediate reformation of whatever you discover amiss; and labour to learn the general lessons of greater submission to God's will, of a more calm indifference to the world, and of a closer attachment to divine converse, and to the views of an approaching invisible state. And whatever particular pro-

portion or correſpondence you may obſerve between this or that circumſtance in your affliction and your former tranſgreſſions, be eſpecially careful to act according to that more peculiar and expreſs voice of the rod. Then you may perhaps have ſpeedy and remarkable reaſon to ſay, that it hath been good for you that you have been *afflicted*; and, with a multitude of others, may learn to number the times of your ſharpeſt trials among the ſweeteſt and the moſt exalted moments of your life. For this purpoſe, let prayer be your frequent employment; and let ſuch ſentiments as theſe, if not in the very ſame terms, be often and affectionately poured out before God.

An humble Addreſs to God under the Preſſure of heavy Afflictions.

O THOU ſupreme, yet all righteous and gracious Governor of the whole univerſe! mean and inconſiderable as this little province of thy ſpacious empire may appear, thou doſt not diſregard the earth and its inhabitants; but attendeſt to its concerns with the moſt condeſcending and gracious regards. *Thou reigneſt, and I rejoice in it*, as it is indeed *matter of univerſal joy*. I believe thy univerſal providence and care; and I firmly believe thy wiſe, holy, and kind interpoſition in every thing which relates to me, and to the circumſtances of my abode in this thy world. I would look through all inferior cauſes unto thee, whoſe eyes are upon all thy creatures; to thee *who formeſt the light, and createſt darkneſs, who makeſt peace, and createſt evil*; to thee, Lord, who, at thy pleaſure, canſt exchange the one for the other, canſt turn the brighteſt noon into midnight, and the darkeſt midnight into noon.

O thou wiſe and merciful Governor of the world! I have often ſaid, *Thy will be done*, and now thy will is painful to me. But ſhall I, upon that account, unſay what I have ſo often ſaid? *God forbid!* I come rather to lay myſelf down at thy feet, and to declare my full and free ſubmiſſion to all thy ſacred pleaſure. O Lord, thou art juſt and righteous in all! I acknowledge, in thy venerable and awful preſence, that I have deſerved this and ten

thousand times more; I acknowledge, that *it is of thy mercy that I am not utterly consumed*, and that any the least degree of comfort yet remains. O Lord, I most readily confess that the sins of one day of my life have merited all these chastisements; and that every day of my life hath been more or less sinful. Smite, therefore, O thou righteous Judge! and I will still adore thee, that instead of the scourge, thou hast not given a commission to the sword to do all the dreadful work of justice, and to pour out my blood in thy presence.

But shall I speak unto thee, only as my Judge? O Lord, thou hast taught me a tender name; thou condescendest to call thyself my Father, and to speak of correction as the effect of thy love. O welcome, welcome those afflictions which are the tokens of thy paternal affection, the marks of my adoption into thy family! Thou knowest what discipline I need; thou seest, O Lord, that bundle of folly which there is in the heart of thy poor froward and thoughtless child; and knowest what rods, and what strokes are needful to drive it away. I would, therefore, *be in humble subjection to the Father of spirits, who chasteneth me for my profit*, would *be in subjection to him, and live*. I would bear thy strokes, not merely because I cannot resist them, but because I love and trust in thee. I would sweetly acquiesce and rest in thy will, as well as stoop to it; and would say, good is the word of the Lord. And I desire, that not only my lips but my soul may acquiesce. Yea, Lord, I would praise thee, that thou wilt show so much regard to me as to apply such remedies as these to the diseases of my mind, and art thus kindly careful to train me up for glory. I have no objection against being afflicted, and in this particular way. *The cup which my Father puts into mine hand, shall I not drink it?* By thine assistance and support, I will. Only be pleased, O Lord, to stand by me, and sometimes to grant me a favourable look in the midst of my sufferings; support my soul, I beseech thee, by thy consolations mingled with my tribulations; and I shall glory in those tribulations that are thus allayed! It has been the experience of many who have reflected on afflicted days with pleasure, and have acknowledged that their comforts have swallowed up their sorrows. And after all that thou hast done, *are thy mercies restrain-*

ed? Is thy hand waxed ſhort? Or canſt thou not ſtill do the ſame for me?

If my heart be leſs tender, leſs ſenſible, thou canſt cure that diſorder, and canſt make this affliction the means of curing it. Thus let it be; and at length, in thine own due time, and in the way which thou ſhalt chooſe, work out deliverance for me; and *ſhow me thy marvellous loving kindneſs, O thou that ſaveſt by thy right hand them that put their truſt in thee* —For I well know, that how dark ſoever this night of affliction ſeems, if thou ſayeſt, *Let there be light*, there ſhall be light. But I would urge nothing before the time thy wiſdom and goodneſs ſhall appoint. I am much more concerned that my afflictions may be ſanctified than that they may be removed. Number me, O God, among the *happy perſons whom*, whilſt *thou chaſteneſt*, thou *teacheſt out of thy law! Show me*, I beſeech thee, *wherefore thou contendeſt with me;* and purify me by the fire which is ſo painful to me while I am paſſing through it! Doſt thou not *chaſten thy children* for this very end, *that they may be partakers of thine holineſs?* Thou knoweſt, O God, it is this my ſoul is breathing after. I am partaker of thy bounty every day and moment of my life; I am partaker of thy goſpel, and, I hope, in ſome meaſure too, a partaker of the grace of it operating on my heart. O may it operate more and more, that I may largely partake of thine holineſs too; that I may come nearer and nearer in the temper of my mind to thee, O bleſſed God, the ſupreme model of perfection! Let my ſoul be (as it were) melted through with the intenſeſt heat of the furnace, if I may but thereby be made fit for being delivered into the mould of thy goſpel, and bearing thy bright and amiable image.

O Lord, *my ſoul longeth for thee; it crieth out for the living God!* In thy preſence, and under the ſupport of thy love, I can bear any thing, and am willing to bear it, if I may grow more lovely in thine eyes, and more meet for thy kingdom. The days of my affliction will have an end; the hour will at length come, when *thou wilt wipe away all my tears.* Though it tarry, I would *wait for it.* My fooliſh heart, in the midſt of all its trials, is ready to grow fond of this earth, diſappointing and grievous as it is; and graciouſly, O God, doſt thou deal with me in breaking thoſe

bonds that would tie me faſter to it. O let my ſoul be girding itſelf up, and ſtretching its wings, in expectation of that bleſſed hour, when it ſhall drop all its ſorrows and incumbrances at once, and ſoar away to expatiate with infinite delight in the regions of liberty, peace, and joy!—*Amen.*

CHAP. XXVI.

The Chriſtian aſſiſted in examining into his Growth in Grace.

The examination important, 1. False marks of growth to be avoided, 2. True marks proposed; such as, (1.) Increasing love to God, 3. (2.) Benevolence to men, 4. (3.) Candour of disposition, 5. (4.) Meekness under injuries, 6. (5.) Serenity amidst the uncertainties of life, 7. (6.) Humility, 8. especially as expressed in evangelical exercises of mind towards Christ and the Spirit, 9. (7.) Zeal for the divine honour, 10 (8.) Habitual and cheerful willingness to exchange worlds, whenever God shall appoint it, 11. Conclusion, 12. The Christian breathing after growth in grace.

1. IF, by divine grace, you have been *born again, not of corruptible ſeed, but of incorruptible,* even *by that word of God which liveth and abideth forever,* not only in the world, and in the church, but in particular ſouls in which it is ſown; you will, *as new-born babes, deſire the ſincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby.* And though, in the moſt advanced ſtate of religion on earth, we are but infants in compariſon of what we hope to be, when in the heavenly world we arrive *unto a perfect man, unto the meaſure of the ſtature of the fulneſs of Chriſt;* yet, as we have ſome exerciſe of a ſanctified reaſon, we ſhall be ſolicitous that we may be growing and thriving infants. And you, my reader, if *ſo be that you have taſted that the Lord is gracious,* will, I doubt not, feel this ſolicitude. I would therefore endeavour to aſſiſt you in making the inquiry, whether religion be on the advance in your ſouls. And here I ſhall warn you againſt ſome falſe marks of growth; and then ſhall endeavour to lay down others on which you may depend as more ſolid. In this view I would obſerve, that you are not to meaſure your growth in grace only, or chief-

ly, by your advances in knowledge, or in zeal, or in any other paſſionate impreſſion of the mind; no, nor by the fervour of devotion alone; but by the habitual determination of the will for God, and by your prevailing diſpoſition to obey his commands, to ſubmit to his diſpoſals, and to ſubſerve his ſchemes in the world.

2. It muſt be allowed, that knowledge and affection in religion are indeed deſirable. Without ſome degree of the former, religion cannot be rational; and it is very reaſonable to believe, that without ſome degree of the latter, it cannot be ſincere, in creatures whoſe natures are conſtituted like ours. Yet there may be a great deal of ſpeculative knowledge, and a great deal of rapturous affection, where there is no true religion at all; and therefore much more when there is no advanced ſtate in it. The exerciſe of our rational faculties upon the evidences of divine revelation, and upon the declaration of it as contained in ſcripture, may furniſh a very wicked man with a well-digeſted body of orthodox divinity in his head, when not one ſingle doctrine of it has ever reached his heart.—An eloquent deſcription of the ſufferings of Chriſt, of the ſolemnities of judgment, of the joys of the bleſſed, and the miſeries of the damned, might move the breaſt even of a man who did not firmly believe them; as we often find ourſelves ſtrongly moved by well-wrought narrations, or diſcourſes, which, at the ſame time, we know to have their foundation in fiction. Natural conſtitution, or ſuch accidental cauſes as are, ſome of them, too low to be here mentioned, may ſupply the eyes with a flood of tears, which may diſcharge itſelf plenteouſly upon almoſt any occaſion that ſhall firſt ariſe. And a proud impatience of contradiction, directly oppoſite as it is to the gentle ſpirit of Chriſtianity, may make a man's blood boil when he hears the notions he has entertained, and eſpecially thoſe which he has openly and vigorouſly eſpouſed, diſputed and oppoſed. This may poſſibly lead him, in terms of ſtrong indignation, to pour out his zeal and his rage before God, in a fond conceit, that, as the God of truth, he is the patron of thoſe favourite doctrines, by whoſe fair appearances perhaps he himſelf is miſled. And if theſe ſpeculative refinements, or thoſe affectionate ſallies

of the mind, be consistent with a total absence of true religion, they are much more apparently consistent with a very low state of it. I would desire to lead you, my friend, into sublimer notions and juster marks; and refer you to other practical writers, and, above all, to the book of God, to prove how material they are. I would therefore entreat you to bring your own heart to answer, as in the presence of God, to such inquiries as these:

3. Do you find divine love, on the whole, advancing in your soul? Do you feel yourself more and more sensible of the presence of God? and does that sense grow more delightful to you than it formerly was? Can you, even when your natural spirits are weak and low, and you are not in any frame for the ardours and ecstasies of devotion, nevertheless find a pleasing rest, a calm repose of heart, in the thought that God is near you, and that he sees the secret sentiments of your soul, while you are, as it were, labouring up the hill, and casting a longing eye towards him, though you cannot say you enjoy any sensible communications from him? Is it agreeable to you to open your heart to his inspection and regard? To present it to him laid bare of every disguise, and to say with David, *Thou, Lord, knowest thy servant?* Do you find a growing esteem and approbation of that sacred law of God, which is the transcript of his moral perfections? Do you inwardly *esteem all his precepts concerning all things to be right?* Do you discern, not only the necessity, but the reasonableness, the beauty, the pleasure of obedience; and feel a growing scorn and contempt for those things which may be offered as the price of your innocence, and would tempt you to sacrifice or to hazard your interest in the divine favour and friendship? Do you not find an ingenuous desire to please God, not only because he is so powerful, and has so many good and so many evil things entirely at his command, but from a veneration of his most amiable nature and character? And do you find your heart habitually reconciled to a most humble subjection, both to his commanding and to his disposing will? Do you perceive that your own will is now more ready and disposed in every circumstance to bear the yoke, and to submit to the divine determination, whatever he appoints to be borne or forborne? Can you *in patience possess your soul?* Can you

maintain a more ſteady calmneſs and ſerenity when God is ſtriking at your deareſt enjoyments in this world, and acting moſt directly contrary to your preſent intereſts, to your natural paſſions and deſires? If you can, it is a moſt certain and noble ſign that grace is grown up in you to a very vigorous ſtate.

4. Examine alſo, what affections you find in your heart towards thoſe who are round about you, and towards the reſt of mankind in general. Do you find your heart overflow with undiſſembled and unreſtrained benevolence? Are you more ſenſible than you once were of thoſe many endearing bonds which unite all men, and eſpecially all Chriſtians into one community, which make them brethren and fellow-citizens? Do all the unfriendly paſſions die and wither in your ſoul, while the kind, ſocial affections grow and ſtrengthen? And though ſelf-love was never the reigning paſſion ſince you became a true Chriſtian, yet as ſome remainders of it are ſtill too ready to work inwardly and to ſhow themſelves, eſpecially as ſudden occaſions ariſe, do you perceive that you get ground of them? Do you think of yourſelf only as one of a great number, whoſe particular intereſts and concerns are of little importance when compared with thoſe of the community, and ought by all means, on all occaſions, to be ſacrificed to them?

5. Reflect eſpecially on the temper of your mind towards thoſe, whom an unſanctified heart might be ready to imagine it had ſome juſt excuſe for excepting out of the liſt of thoſe it loves, and towards whom you are ready to feel a ſecret averſion, or at leaſt an alienation from them. How does your mind ſtand affected towards thoſe who differ from you in their religious ſentiments and practices? I do not ſay that Chriſtian charity will require you to think every error harmleſs. It argues no want of love to a friend, in ſome caſes to fear leſt his diſorder ſhould prove more fatal than he ſeems to imagine; nay, ſometimes the very tenderneſs of friendſhip may increaſe that apprehenſion. But to hate perſons becauſe we think they are miſtaken, and to aggravate every difference in judgment or practice, into a fatal and damnable error, that deſtroys all Chriſtian communion and love, is a ſymptom generally much worſe than the evil it condemns. Do you love the image of Chriſt in a perſon who thinks himſelf obliged in

conſcience to profeſs and worſhip in a manner different from yourſelf? Nay farther, can you love and honour that which is truly amiable and excellent in thoſe, in whom much is defective; in thoſe, in whom there is a mixture of bigotry and narrowneſs of ſpirit, which may lead them perhaps to ſlight, or even to cenſure you? Can you love them as the diſciples and ſervants of Chriſt, who, through a miſtaken zeal, may be ready to *caſt out your name as evil*, to warn others againſt you as a dangerous perſon? This is none of the leaſt triumphs of charity, nor any deſpicable evidence of an advance in religion.

6. And, on this head, reflect farther, how can you bear injuries? There is a certain hardineſs of ſoul in this reſpect, which argues a confirmed ſtate in piety and virtue. Does every thing of this kind hurry and ruffle you, ſo as to put you on contrivances how you may recompenſe, or at leaſt, how you may diſgrace and expoſe him who has done you the wrong? Or can you ſtand the ſhock calmly, and eaſily divert your mind to other objects, only when you recollect theſe things, pitying and praying for thoſe, who, with the worſt tempers and views, are aſſaulting you? This is a Chriſt-like temper indeed, and he will own it as ſuch; will own you as one of his ſoldiers, as one of his heroes; eſpecially if it riſes ſo far, as, inſtead of *being overcome of evil, to overcome evil with good.* Watch over your ſpirit and over your tongue when injuries are offered; and ſee whether you be ready to meditate upon them, to aggravate them to yourſelf, to complain of them to others, and to lay on all the load and blame that you in juſtice can; or whether you be ready to put the kindeſt conſtruction upon the offence, to excuſe it as far as reaſon will allow, and (where, after all, it will wear a black and odious aſpect) to forgive it, heartily to forgive it, and that even before any ſubmiſſion is made, or pardon aſked; and in token of the ſincerity of that forgiveneſs, to be contriving what can be done by ſome benefit or other towards the injurious perſon, to teach him a better temper.

7. Examine farther with regard to the other evils and calamities of life, and even with regard to its uncertainties, how you can bear them? Do you find your ſoul is in this reſpect gathering ſtrength? Have you fewer foreboding fears and diſquieting alarms, than you once had, as to

what may happen in life? Can you truſt the wiſdom and goodneſs of God to order your affairs for you, with more complacency and cheerfulneſs than formerly? Do you find yourſelf able to unite your thoughts more in ſurveying preſent circumſtances, that you may collect immediate duty from them, though you know not what God will next appoint or call you to? And when you feel the ſmart of affliction, do you make a leſs matter of it? Can you transfer your heart more eaſily to heavenly and divine objects, without an anxious ſolicitude, whether this or that burden be removed, ſo it may but be ſanctified to promote your communion with God, and your ripeneſs for glory?

8. Examine alſo, whether you advance in humility. This is a ſilent, but moſt excellent grace; and they who are moſt eminent in it, are deareſt to God, and moſt fit for the communications of his preſence to them. Do you then feel your mind more emptied of proud and haughty imaginations; not prone ſo much to look back upon paſt ſervices which it has performed, as forward to thoſe which are yet before you, and inward upon the remaining imperfections of your heart? Do you more tenderly obſerve your daily ſlips and miſcarriages, and find yourſelf diſpoſed to mourn over thoſe things before the Lord, that once paſſed with you as ſlight matters; though when you come to ſurvey them as in the preſence of God, you find they were not wholly involuntary, or free from guilt? Do you feel in your breaſt a deeper apprehenſion of the infinite majeſty of the bleſſed God, and of the glory of his natural and moral perfections; ſo as, in conſequence of thoſe views, to perceive yourſelf annihilated in his preſence, and to ſhrink into *leſs than nothing, and vanity?* If this be your temper, God will look upon you with peculiar favour, and will viſit you more and more with the diſtinguiſhed bleſſings of his grace.

9. But there is another great branch and effect of Chriſtian humility, which it would be an unpardonable negligence to omit. Let me, therefore, farther inquire, Are you more frequently renewing your application, your ſincere, ſteady, determinate application to the righteouſneſs and blood of Chriſt, as being ſenſible how unworthy you are

to appear before God otherwiſe than in him? And do the remaining corruptions of your heart humble you before him, though the diſorders of your life are in a great meaſure cured? Are you more earneſt to obtain the quickening influences of the Holy Spirit? And have you ſuch a ſenſe of your own weakneſs, as to engage you to depend, in all the duties you perform, upon the communications of his grace to *help your infirmities?* Can you, at the cloſe of your moſt religious, exemplary, and uſeful days, bluſh before God for the deficiencies of them, while others perhaps may be ready to admire and extol your conduct? And while you give the glory of all that has been right to him from whom the ſtrength and grace have been derived, are you coming to the blood of ſprinkling to free you from the guilt which mingles itſelf even with the beſt of your ſervices? Do you learn to receive the bounties of Providence, not only with thankfulneſs as coming from God, but with a mixture of ſhame and confuſion too, under a conſciouſneſs that you do not deſerve them, and are continually forfeiting them? And do you juſtify Providence in your afflictions and diſappointments, even while many are flouriſhing around you in the full bloom of proſperity, whoſe offences have been more viſible at leaſt, and more notorious than yours?

10. Do you alſo advance in zeal and activity for the ſervice of God, and the happineſs of mankind? Does your love ſhow itſelf ſolid and ſincere by a continual flow of good works from it? Can you view the ſorrows of others with tender compaſſion, and with projects and contrivances what you may do to relieve them? Do you feel in your breaſt that you are more frequently *deviſing liberal things*, and ready to wave your own advantage or pleaſure that you may accompliſh them? Do you find your imaginations teeming with conceptions and ſchemes for the advancement of the cauſe and intereſt of Chriſt in the world, for the propagation of his goſpel, and for the happineſs of your fellow creatures? And do you not only pray, but act for it; act in ſuch a manner as to ſhew that you pray in earneſt, and feel a readineſs to do what little you can in this caſe, even though others, who might if they pleaſed, very conveniently do a vaſt deal more, will do nothing?

11. And not to enlarge on this copious head, reflect once more how your affections ſtand with regard to this world and another. Are you more deeply and practically convinced of the vanity of thoſe *things which are ſeen and are temporal?* Do you perceive your expectations from them, and your attachments to them to diminiſh? You are willing to ſtay in this world as long as your Father pleaſes, and it is right and well; but do you find your bonds ſo looſened to it that you are willing, heartily willing, to leave it at the ſhorteſt warning; ſo that if God ſhould ſee fit to ſummon you away on a ſudden, though it ſhould be in the midſt of your enjoyments, purſuits, expectations, and hopes, you would cordially conſent to that remove; without ſaying, Lord, let me ſtay a little while longer to enjoy this or that agreeable entertainment, to finiſh this or that ſcheme? Can you think, with an habitual calmneſs, and hearty approbation, if ſuch be the divine pleaſure, of waking no more when you lie down on your bed, of returning home no more when you go out of your houſe? And yet, on the other hand, how great ſoever the burdens of life are, do you find a willingneſs to bear them, in ſubmiſſion to the will of your heavenly Father, though it ſhould be to many future years; and though they ſhould be years of far greater affliction than you have ever yet ſeen? Can you ſay calmly and ſteadily, if not with ſuch overflowings of tender affections as you could deſire, *Behold thy ſervant, thy child is in thine hand, do with me as ſeemeth good in thy ſight!* My will is melted into thine, to be lifted up or laid down, to be carried out, or brought in, to be here or there, in this or that circumſtance, juſt as thou pleaſeſt, and as ſhall beſt ſuit with thy great, extenſive plan, which it is impoſſible that I, or all the angels in heaven ſhould mend?

12. Theſe, if I underſtand matters aright, are ſome of the moſt ſubſtantial evidences of growth and eſtabliſhment in religion. Search after them; bleſs God for them, ſo far as you diſcover them in yourſelf; and ſtudy to advance in them daily, under the influences of divine grace, to which I heartily recommend you, and to which I entreat you frequently to recommend yourſelf.

The Christian breathing earnestly for Growth in Grace.

O THOU ever blessed Fountain of natural and spiritual life! I thank thee that I live, and know the exercises and pleasures of a religious life. I bless thee that thou hast infused into me thine own vital breath, though I was once *dead in trespasses and sins*; so that I am become, in a sense peculiar to thine own children, *a living soul*. But it is mine earnest desire, that I may not only live, but grow; *grow in grace, and in the knowledge of my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, upon an acquaintance with whom my progress in it so evidently depends! In this view, I humbly entreat thee, that thou wilt form my mind to right notions in religion, that I may not judge of grace by any wrong conceptions of it, nor measure my advances in it by those things which are merely the effects of nature, and possibly its corrupt effects!

May I be seeking after an increase of divine love to thee, my God and Father in Christ; of unreserved resignation to thy wise and holy will, and of extensive benevolence to my fellow-creatures; may I grow in patience and fortitude of soul, in humility and zeal, in spirituality and a heavenly disposition of mind, and in a concern, *that whether present or absent, I may be accepted of the Lord*; that whether I live or die, it may be for his glory! In a word, as thou knowest I hunger and thirst after righteousness, make me whatever thou wouldst delight to see me! Draw on my soul, by the gentle influences of thy gracious Spirit, every trace, and every feature, which thine eyes, O heavenly Father, may survey with pleasure, and which thou mayest acknowledge as thine own image!

I am sensible, O Lord, I have not as yet attained! Yea, my soul is utterly confounded to think how far I am from being already perfect; but this one thing (after the great example of thine apostle, and the much greater of his Lord) *I would endeavour to do; forgetting the things which are behind, I would press forward to those which are before.* O that thou wouldst feed my soul by thy word and Spirit! Having been, as I humbly hope and trust, regenerated by it, *being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, even by that word which liveth and abideth forever*;

as a new-born babe, I desire the sincere milk of the word, that I may grow thereby. And may *my profiting appear unto all men,* till at length *I come unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ;* and after having enjoyed the pleasure of those that flourish eminently in the courts below, be fixed in the paradise above! I ask and hope it through him, of *whose fulness we have all received, even grace for grace; to him be glory both now and forever! —Amen.*

CHAP. XXVII.

The advanced Christian reminded of the Mercies of God, and exhorted to the Exercises of habitual Love to him, and Joy in him.

An holy joy in God our privilege as well as our duty, 1. The Christian invited to the exercise of it, 2. (1.) By the representation of temporal mercies, 3. (2.) By the consideration of spiritual favours, 4. (3.) By the views of eternal happiness, 5. and (4.) Of the mercies of God to others, the living and the dead, 6. The chapter closes with an exhortation to this heavenly exercise, 7. and with an example of the genuine workings of this grateful joy in God.

1. I WOULD now suppose my reader to find, on an examination of his spiritual state, that he is growing in grace. And if you desire that this growth may at once be acknowledged and promoted, let me call your soul to that more affectionate exercise of love to God, and joy in him, which suits, and strengthens, and exalts the character of the advanced Christian; and which I beseech you to regard, not only as your privilege, but as your duty too. Love is the most sublime, generous principle of all true and acceptable obedience; and with love, when so wisely and happily fixed, when so certainly returned, joy, proportionable joy must naturally be connected. It may justly grieve a man that enters into the spirit of Christianity, to see how low a life the generality even of sincere Christians commonly live in this respect. *Rejoice then in the Lord, ye righteous, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness,* and of all those other perfections and glories, which are in-

cluded in that majeſtic, that wonderful, that delightful name, *The Lord thy God!* Spend not your ſacred moments merely in confeſſion, or in petition, though each muſt have their daily ſhare; but give a part, a conſiderable part, to the celeſtial and angelic work of praiſe. Yea, labour to carry about with you continually an heart overflowing with ſuch ſentiments, warmed and inflamed with ſuch affections.

2. Are there not continually rays enough diffuſed from the great Father of light and love to enkindle it in our boſom? Come, my Chriſtian friend and brother, come and ſurvey with me the goodneſs of our heavenly Father. And O that he would give me ſuch a ſenſe of it, that I might repreſent it in a ſuitable manner; that *while I am muſing, the fire may burn* in my own heart, and be communicated to yours! And O that it might paſs, with the lines I write, from ſoul to ſoul; awakening in the breaſt of every Chriſtian that reads them, ſentiments more worthy of the children of God, and the heirs of glory, who are to ſpend an eternity in thoſe ſacred exerciſes to which I am now endeavouring to excite you!

3. Have you not reaſon to adopt the words of David, and ſay, *How many are thy gracious thoughts unto me, O Lord! How great is the ſum of them! When I would count them, they are more in number than the ſand.* You indeed know where to begin the ſurvey; for the favours of God to you began with your being. Commemorate it therefore with a grateful heart, that the *eyes which ſaw your ſubſtance, being yet imperfect*, beheld you with a friendly care, *when you were made in ſecret*, and have watched over you ever ſince; and that *the hand which drew the plan of your members, when as yet there was none of them*, not only faſhioned them at firſt, but from that time has been concerned in *keeping all your bones, ſo that none of them is broken*; and that indeed it is to this you owe it that you live. Look back upon the path you have trod, from the day that God brought you out of the womb, and ſay, whether you do not ſee all the road thick ſet with the marks and memorials of the divine goodneſs. Recollect the places where you have lived, and the perſons with whom you have moſt intimately converſed; and call to mind the mercies you have received in thoſe places, and from thoſe perſons, as the inſtruments of the divine care and goodneſs. Recollect the

difficulties and dangers with which you have been surrounded; and reflect attentively on what God hath done to defend you from them, or to carry you through them. Think how often there has been but a step between you and death; and how suddenly God hath sometimes interposed to set you in safety, even before you apprehended your danger. Think of those chambers of illness in which you have been confined, and from whence perhaps you once thought you should go forth no more; but said, with Hezekiah, *In the cutting off of my days, I shall go to the gates of the grave; I am deprived of the residue of my years.* God has, it may be, since that time, added many years to your life; and you know not how many more may be in reserve, or how much usefulness and happiness may attend each. Survey your circumstances in relative life; how many kind friends are surrounding you daily, and studying how they may contribute to your comfort. Reflect on those remarkable circumstances in providence, which occasioned the knitting of some bonds of this kind, which, next to those which join your soul to God, you number among the happiest. And forget not, in how many instances, when these dear lives have been threatened, lives, perhaps, more sensibly dear than your own, God hath given them back from the border of the grave, and so added new endearments arising from that tender circumstance to all your after converse with them. Nor forget, in how gracious a manner he hath supported some others in their last moments, and enabled them to leave behind a sweet odour of piety, which hath embalmed their memories, revived you when ready to faint under the sorrows of the first separation, and on the whole, made even the recollection of their death delightful.

4. But it is more than time that I lead on your thoughts to the many spiritual mercies which God hath bestowed upon you. Look back as it were, to the *rock from whence you were hewn, and to the hole of the pit from whence you were digged.* Reflect seriously on the state wherein divine grace found you; under how much guilt, under how much pollution! In what danger, in what ruin! Think what was, and O think, with yet deeper reflection, what would have been the case! The eye of God, which penetrates into eternity, saw what your mind, amused with the trifles of

preſent time and ſenſual gratifications, was utterly ignorant and regardleſs of; it ſaw you on the borders of eternity, and pitied you; ſaw that you would in a little time have been ſuch a helpleſs, wretched creature, as the ſinner that is juſt now dead, and has, to his infinite ſurpriſe and everlaſting terror, met his unexpected doom, and would, like him, ſtand thunder-ſtruck in aſtoniſhment and deſpair. This God ſaw, and he pitied you; and being merciful to you, he provided, in the counſels of his eternal love and grace, a Redeemer for you, and purchaſed you to himſelf with the blood of his Son; a price, which, if you will pauſe upon it, and think ſeriouſly what it was, muſt ſurely affect you to ſuch a degree, as to make you fall down before God in wonder and ſhame, to think it ſhould ever have been given for you. To accompliſh theſe beſt purpoſes, he ſent his grace into your heart; ſo that, though *you were once darkneſs, you are now light in the Lord.* He made that happy change which you now feel in your ſoul, and by his Holy Spirit which is given to you, he ſhed abroad that principle of love, which is enkindled by this review, and now flames with greater ardour than before. Thus far he hath ſupported you in your Chriſtian courſe; and, *having obtained help from him, it is that you continue even to this day.* He hath not only bleſſed you, but made you a bleſſing; and though you have not been ſo uſeful as that holy generoſity of heart, which he has excited, would have engaged you to deſire, yet ſome good you have done in the ſtation in which he has fixed you. Some of your brethren of mankind have been relieved; perhaps too, ſome thoughtleſs creature reclaimed to virtue and happineſs, by his bleſſing on your endeavours. Some in the way to heaven, are praiſing God for you; and ſome, perhaps, already there, are longing for your arrival, that they may thank you in nobler and more expreſſive forms for benefits, the importance of which they now ſufficiently underſtand, though while here they could never conceive it.

5. Chriſtian, look round on the numberleſs bleſſings of one kind and of another with which you are already encompaſſed; and advance your proſpect ſtill farther to what faith yet diſcovers within the veil. Think of thoſe now unknown tranſports with which thou ſhalt drop every burden in the grave, and thine immortal ſpirit ſhall mount,

light and joyful, holy and happy, to God, its original, its support, and its hope; to God, the source of being, of holiness, and of pleasure; to Jesus, through whom all these mercies are derived to thee, and who will appoint thee a throne near his own, to be forever the spectator and partaker of his glory. Think of the rapture with which thou shalt attend his triumph in the resurrection day, and receive this poor, mouldering, corruptible body, transformed into his glorious image; and then think, "These hopes are not mine alone, but the hopes of thousands and of millions. Multitudes, whom I number among the dearest of my friends upon earth, are rejoicing with me in these apprehensions and views; and God gives me sometimes to see the smiles on their cheeks, the sweet humble hope that sparkles in their eyes, and shines through the tears of tender gratitude; and to hear that little of their inward complacency and joy which language can express. Yea, and multitudes more, who were once equally dear to me with these, though I have laid them in the grave, and wept over their dust, are living to God, living in the possession of inconceivable delights, and drinking large draughts of the water of life, which flows in perpetual streams at his right hand."

6. O Christian, thou art still intimately united and allied to them. Death cannot break a friendship thus cemented; and it ought not to render thee insensible of the happiness of those friends for whose memory thou retainest so just an honour. They live to God, as his servants; they *serve him and see his face;* and they make but a small part of that glorious assembly. Millions, equally worthy of thine esteem and affection, inhabit those blissful regions; and wilt thou not rejoice in their joy, and adore that everlasting spring of holiness and happiness, from whence each of these streams is derived? Yea, I will add, while the blessed angels are so kindly regarding us, while they are ministering to thee, O Christian, and bearing thee in their arms *as an heir of salvation*, wilt thou not rejoice in their felicity too; and wilt thou not adore that God who gives them all the superior glory of their more exalted nature, and gives them a heaven, which fills them with blessedness, even while they seem to withdraw from it that they may attend on thee?

7. This, and infinitely more than this, the bleſſed God is, was, and ſhall ever be. Theſe felicities of the bleſſed ſpirits that ſurround his throne, and thy felicities, O Chriſtian, are immortal. Theſe heavenly luminaries ſhall glow with an undecaying flame; and thou ſhalt ſhine and glitter among them, when the ſun and ſtars are gone out; ſtill ſhall the unchanging Father of lights pour forth his beams upon them; and the luſtre they reflect from him, and their happineſs in him, ſhall be everlaſting, ſhall be ever growing. Bow down, O thou child of God, thou heir of glory, bow down, and let all that is within thee unite in one act of grateful love; and let all that is around thee, all that is before thee, in the proſpects of an unbounded eternity, concur to elevate and tranſport thy ſoul; that thou mayeſt, as far as poſſible, begin the work and bleſſedneſs of heaven, in falling down before the God of it, in opening thine heart to his gracious influences, and in breathing out before him that incenſe of praiſe, which theſe warm beams of his preſence and love have ſo great a tendency to produce, and to ennoble with a fragrancy reſembling that of his paradiſe above.

The grateful Soul rejoicing in the Bleſſings of Providence and Grace, and pouring out itſelf before God in vigorous and affectionate Exerciſes of Love and Praiſe.

O MY GOD, it is enough! I have muſed, and *the fire burneth!* But O! in what language ſhall the flame break forth! What can I ſay but this, that my heart admires thee, and adores thee, and loves thee! My little veſſel is as full as it can hold; and I would pour out all that fulneſs before thee, that it may grow capable of receiving more and more. Thou art *my hope, and my help; my glory, and the lifter up of my head. My heart rejoiceth in thy ſalvation;* and when I ſet myſelf, under the influences of thy good Spirit, to converſe with thee, a thouſand delightful thoughts ſpring up at once; a thouſand ſources of pleaſure are unſealed, and flow in upon my ſoul with ſuch refreſhment and joy, that they ſeem to crowd into every moment the happineſs of days, and weeks, and months.

I bleſs thee, O God, for this ſoul of mine, which thou haſt created; which thou haſt taught to ſay, and I hope to the happieſt purpoſe, *Where is God my Maker?* I bleſs thee for the knowledge with which thou haſt adorned it. I bleſs thee for that grace with which, I truſt, I may (not without humble wonder) ſay, thou haſt ſanctified it; though alas! the celeſtial plant is fixed in too barren a ſoil, and does not flouriſh to the degree I could wiſh.

I bleſs thee alſo for that body which thou haſt given me, and which thou preſerveſt as yet in its ſtrength and vigour; not only capable of reliſhing the entertainments which thou provideſt for its various ſenſes, but (which I eſteem far more valuable than any of them for its own ſake) capable of acting with ſome vivacity in thy ſervice. I bleſs thee for that eaſe and freedom with which theſe limbs of mine move themſelves, and obey the dictates of my ſpirit, I hope as guided by thine. I bleſs thee that *the keepers of the houſe do not yet tremble, nor the ſtrong men bow themſelves; that they that look out of the windows are not yet darkened, nor the daughters of muſic brought low.* I bleſs thee, O God of life, that *the ſilver cord is not yet looſed, nor the golden bowl broken:* for it is thine hand that braces all my nerves, and thine infinite ſkill that prepares thoſe ſpirits which flow in ſo freely, and, when exhauſted, recruit ſo ſoon and ſo plentifully.

I praiſe thee for that royal bounty with which thou provideſt for the daily ſupport of mankind in general, and for mine in particular; for the various tables which thou ſpreadeſt before me, and for the overflowing cup which thou putteſt into my hands. I bleſs thee, that theſe bounties of thy providence do not ſerve to upbraid a diſabled appetite, and are not like meſſes of meat ſet before the dead. I bleſs thee too, that *I eat not my morſel alone;* but ſhare it with ſo many agreeable friends, who add the reliſh of a ſocial life to that of the animal, at our ſeaſons of common repaſt. I thank thee for ſo many dear relatives at home, for ſo many kind friends abroad, who are capable of ſerving me in various inſtances, and diſpoſed to make an obliging uſe of that capacity.

Nor would I forget to acknowledge thy favour, in rendering me capable of ſerving others, and giving me in many inſtances to know how much *more bleſſed it is to give than receive.* I thank thee for a heart which feels the ſorrows of

the neceſſitous, and a mind which can make it my early care and refreſhment to contrive, according to my little ability, for their relief; for *this alſo cometh forth from thee, O Lord*, the great author of every benevolent inclination, of every prudent ſcheme, of every ſucceſsful attempt to ſpread happineſs around us, or in any inſtance to leſſen diſtreſs.

And ſurely, O Lord, if I thus acknowledge the pleaſures of ſympathy with the afflicted, much more muſt I bleſs thee for thoſe of ſympathy with the happy, with thoſe that are completely bleſſed. I adore thee for the ſtreams that water paradiſe, and maintain it in ever-flouriſhing, ever-growing delight. I praiſe thee for the reſt, the joy, the tranſport thou art giving to many that were once dear to me on earth; whoſe ſorrows it was my labour to ſooth, and whoſe joys, eſpecially in thee, it was the delight of my heart to promote. I praiſe thee for the bleſſedneſs of every ſaint, and of every angel, that ſurrounds thy throne above; and I praiſe thee with accents of diſtinguiſhed pleaſure for that reviving hope which thou haſt implanted in my boſom, that I ſhall ere long know, by clear ſight, and by everlaſting experience, what that felicity of theirs is which I now only diſcover at a diſtance, through the comparatively obſcure glaſs of faith. Even now I am *waiting for thy ſalvation*, with that ardent deſire on the one hand which its ſublime greatneſs cannot but inſpire into the believing ſoul, and that calm reſignation on the other, which the immutability of thy promiſe eſtabliſhes.

And now, O my God, what ſhall I ſay unto thee! What, but that I love thee above all the powers of language to expreſs! That I love thee for what thou art to thy creatures, who are, in their various forms, every moment deriving being, knowledge, and happineſs from thee, in numbers and in degrees far beyond what my narrow imagination can conceive. But, O, I adore and love thee yet far more for what thou art in thyſelf; for thoſe ſtores of perfection, which creation has not diminiſhed, and which never can be exhauſted by all the effects of it which thou imparteſt to thy creatures; that infinite perfection, which makes thee thine own happineſs, thine own end; amiable, infinitely amiable and venerable, were all derived excellency and happineſs forgotten.

O thou firſt, thou greateſt, thou faireſt of all objects! Thou only great, thou only fair, poſſeſs all my ſoul! And ſurely thou doſt poſſeſs it. While I thus feel thy ſacred Spirit breathing on my heart, and exciting theſe fervours of love to thee, I cannot doubt it any more than I can doubt the reality of this animal life, while I exert the actings of it, and feel its ſenſations. Surely if ever I knew the appetite of hunger, my ſoul hungers after righteouſneſs, and longs for a greater conformity to thy bleſſed nature, and holy will. If ever my palate felt thirſt, *my ſoul thirſteth for God, even for the living God*, and panteth for the more abundant communication of his favour. If ever this body, when wearied with labours or journeys, knew what it was to wiſh for the refreſhment of my bed, and rejoiced to reſt there, my ſoul, with ſweet acquieſcence, reſts upon thy boſom, O my heavenly Father, and returns to its repoſe in the embraces of its God, who *hath dealt ſo bountifully with it*. And if ever I ſaw the face of a beloved friend with complacency and joy, I rejoice in beholding thy face, O Lord, and in calling thee my Father in Chriſt. Such thou art, and ſuch thou wilt be, for time and for eternity. What have I more to do, but to commit myſelf to thee for both? Leaving it to thee to chooſe mine inheritance, and to order my affairs for me, while all my buſineſs is to ſerve thee, and all my delight to praiſe thee. *My ſoul follows hard after God, becauſe his right hand upholds me.* Let it ſtill bear me up, and I ſhall preſs on towards thee, till all my deſires be accompliſhed in the eternal enjoyment of thee!—*Amen.*

CHAP. XXVIII.

The eſtabliſhed Chriſtian urged to exert himſelf for Purpoſes of Uſefulneſs.

A ſincere love to God will express itself, not only in devotion but in benevolence to men, 1, 2. This is the command of God, 3. The true Christian feels his soul wrought to a holy conformity to it, 4. And therefore will desire instructions on this head, 5. Accordingly, directions are given for the improvement of various talents; particularly, (1.) Genius and learning, 6. (2.) Power, 7. (3.) Domestic authority, 8. (4.) Esteem, 9. (5.) Riches, 10. Several good ways of employing them, hinted at, 11. Prudence in expense

urged, for the support of charity, 12, 13. Divine direction in this respect to be sought, 14. The Christian breathing after more extensive usefulness.

1. SUCH as I have described in the former chapter, I trust are, and will be, the frequent exercises of your souls before God. Thus will your love and gratitude breathe itself forth in the divine presence, and will, through Jesus the great Mediator, come up before it as incense, and yield an acceptable savour. But then you must remember this will not be the only effect of that love to God, which I have supposed to warm your heart. If it be sincere, it will not spend itself in words alone; but will discover itself in actions, and will produce, as its genuine fruit, an unfeigned love to your fellow-creatures, and an unwearied desire and labour to do them good continually.

2. "Has the great Father of mercies," will you say, "looked upon me with so gracious an eye; has he not only forgiven me ten thousand offences, but enriched me with such a variety of benefits? O! what shall I render to him for them all! Instruct me, O ye Oracles of eternal truth! instruct me, ye elder Brethren in the family of my heavenly Father! instruct me, above all, O thou Spirit of wisdom and of love, what I may be able to do, to express my love to the great eternal Fountain of love, and to approve my fidelity to him, who has already done so much to engage it, and who will take so much pleasure in owning and rewarding it!"

3. This, O Christian, *is the command which we have heard from the beginning*, and it will ever continue in unimpaired force, *that he who loveth God, should love his brother also*; and should express that love, *not in word and profession alone, but in deed and in truth*. You are to *love your neighbour as yourself*; to love the whole creation of God; and, so far as your influence can extend, must endeavour to make it happy.

4. "Yes," will you say, "and I do love it. I feel the golden chain of the divine love encircling us all, and binding us close to each other, joining us in one body; and diffusing one soul through all. May happiness, true and sublime, perpetual and ever-growing happiness, reign through the whole world of God's rational and obedient creatures in heaven and earth! And may every revolted creature, that

is capable of being recovered and reſtored, be made obedient; yea, may the neceſſary puniſhment of thoſe who are irrecoverable, be over-ruled by infinite wiſdom and love, to the good of the whole!"

5. Theſe are right ſentiments; and if they are indeed the ſentiments of your heart, O reader, and not an empty form of vain words, they will be attended with a ſerious concern to act in ſubordination to this great ſcheme of Divine Providence, according to your abilities, in their utmoſt extent. And to this purpoſe they will put you on ſurveying the peculiar circumſtances of your life and being, that you may diſcover what opportunities of uſefulneſs they now afford, and how thoſe opportunities and capacities may be improved. Enter, therefore, into ſuch a ſurvey; not that you may pride yourſelf in the diſtinctions of Divine Providence or grace towards you or *having received, may glory as if you had not received*; but that you may deal faithfully with the great Proprietor, whoſe ſteward you are, and by whom you are entruſted with every talent, which, with reſpect to any claim from your fellow-creatures, you may call your own. And here, *having gifts differing according to the grace which is now given unto you*, let us hold the balance with an impartial hand, that ſo we may determine what it is that God requires of us; which is nothing leſs than doing the moſt we can invent, contrive, and effect, for the general good. But O, how ſeldom is this eſtimate faithfully made! And how much does the world around us, and how much do our own ſouls ſuffer, for want of that fidelity!

6. Hath God given you genius and learning? It was not that you might amuſe or deck yourſelf with it, and kindle a blaze which ſhould only ſerve to attract and dazzle the eyes of men; it was intended to be the means of leading both yourſelf and them to the Father of lights. And it will be your duty, according to the peculiar turn of that genius and capacity, either to endeavour to improve and adorn human life, or, by a more direct application of it to divine ſubjects, to plead the cauſe of religion, to defend its truths, to enforce and recommend its practice, to deter men from courſes which ſhould be diſhonourable to God and fatal to themſelves, and to try the utmoſt efforts of all the ſolemnity and tenderneſs with which you can clothe

your addreſſes, to lead them into the paths of virtue and of happineſs.

7. Has God inveſted you with power, whether it be in a larger or ſmaller ſociety? Remember, that this power was given you that God might be honoured, and thoſe placed under your government, whether domeſtic or public, might be made happy. Be concerned, therefore, whether you be entruſted with the rod or the ſword, it may *not be borne in vain.* Are you a magiſtrate? Have you any ſhare in the great and tremendous charge of enacting laws? Reverence the authority of the Supreme Legiſlator, the great Guardian of ſociety; promote none, conſent to none, which you do not in your own conſcience eſteem, in preſent circumſtances, an intimation of his will; and in the eſtabliſhment of which you do not firmly believe you ſhall be *his miniſter for good.* Have you the charge of executing laws? Put life into them by a vigorous and ſtrenuous execution, according to the nature of the particular office you bear. Retain not an empty name of authority. Permit not yourſelf to fall aſleep on the tribunal. Be active, be wakeful, be obſervant of what paſſeth around you. Protect the upright and the innocent. Break in pieces the power of the oppreſſor. Unveil every diſhoneſt art. Diſgrace as well as defeat the wretch, that makes his diſtinguiſhed abilities the diſguiſe or the protection of the wickedneſs, which he ought rather to endeavour to expoſe, and to drive out of the world with abhorrence.

8. Are you placed only at the head of a private family? Rule it for God. Adminiſter the concerns of that little kingdom with the ſame views, and for the ſame principles, which I have been inculcating on the powerful and the great; if by an unexpected accident, any of them ſhould ſuffer their eyes to glance upon the paſſage above. Your children and ſervants are your natural ſubjects. Let good order be eſtabliſhed among them, and keep them under a regular diſcipline. Let them be inſtructed in the principles of religion, that they may know how reaſonable ſuch a diſcipline is; and let them be accuſtomed to act accordingly. You cannot indeed change their hearts, but you may very much influence their conduct; and by that means may preſerve them from many ſnares, may do a great deal to make them good members of ſociety, and may *ſet them in*

the way of God's steps, if peradventure passing by he may bless them with the riches of his grace. And fail not to do your utmost to convince them of their need of those blessings; labour to engage them to an high esteem of them, and to an earnest desire after them, as incomparably more valuable than any thing else.

9. Again. Has God been pleased to raise you to esteem among your fellow-creatures, which is not always in proportion to a man's rank or possessions in human life? Are your counsels heard with attention? Is your company sought? Does God give you good acceptance in the eyes of men, so that they do not only put the fairest construction on your words, but overlook faults of which you are conscious to yourself, and consider your actions and performances in the most indulgent and favourable light? You ought to regard this, not only as a favour of Providence, and as an encouragement to you cheerfully to pursue your duty, in the several branches of it, for the time to come; but also, as giving you much greater opportunities of usefulness than in your present station you could otherwise have had. If your character has any weight in the world, throw it into the right scale. Endeavour to keep virtue and goodness in countenance. Affectionately give your hand to modest worth, where it seems to be depressed or overlooked, though shining, when viewed in its proper light, with a lustre which you may think much superior to your own. Be an advocate for truth; be a counsellor of peace; be an example of candour; and do all you can to reconcile the hearts of men, and especially of good men, to each other, however they may differ in their opinions about matters which it possible for good men to dispute. And let the caution and humility of your behaviour in circumstances of such superior eminence, and amidst so many tokens of general esteem, silently reprove the rashness and haughtiness of those, who, perhaps, are remarkable for little else; or who, if their abilities were indeed considerable, must be despised, and whose talents must be in a great measure lost to the public, till that rashness and haughtiness of spirit be subdued. Nor suffer yourself to be interrupted in this generous and worthy course, by the little attacks of envy and calumny, which you may meet with in it. Be still attentive to the general good, and steadily resolute in

your efforts to promote it; and leave it to Providence to guard or to rescue your character from the base assaults of malice and falsehood; which will often, without your labour, confute themselves, and heap upon the authors greater shame, or (if they are inaccessible to that) greater infamy, than your humanity will allow you to wish them.

10. Once more. Has God blessed you with riches? Has he placed you in such circumstances, that you have more than you absolutely need for the subsistence of yourself and your family? Remember your approaching account. Remember what an incumbrance these things often prove to men, in the way of their salvation, and how often, according to our Lord's express declaration, they render it *as difficult to enter into the kingdom of God, as it is for a camel to go through the eye of a needle.* Let it therefore be your immediate, your earnest, and your daily prayer, that riches may not be a snare and a shame to you, as they are to by far the greater part of their possessors. Appropriate, I beseech you, some certain part and proportion of your estate and revenues to charitable uses; with a provisional increase, as God shall prosper you, in any extraordinary instance. By this mean you will always have a fund of charity at hand; and you will probably be more ready to communicate, when you look upon what is so deposited as not in any sense your own, but as already actually given away to those uses, though not yet affixed to particular objects. It is not for me to say what that proportion ought to be. To those who have large revenues and no children, perhaps a third or one half may be too little; to those whose incomes are small, and their charge considerable, though they have something more than is absolutely necessary, it is possible a tenth may be too much. But pray that God would guide your mind; make a trial for one year, on such terms as in your conscience you think will be most pleasing to him; and let your observations on that teach you to fix your proportion for the next; always remembering that he requires justice in the first place, and almsdeeds only so far as may consist with that. Yet, at the same time, take heed of that treacherous, delusive, and, in many instances, destructive imagination, that justice to your family requires that you should leave your children very rich; which has, perhaps, cost some parsimonious parents

the lives of thoſe darlings for whom they laid up the portion of the poor; and what fatal conſequences of divine diſpleaſure may attend it to thoſe that yet ſurvive, God only knows; and I heartily pray that you or yours may never learn by experience.

11. And that your heart may be yet more opened, and that your charity may be directed to the beſt purpoſes, let me briefly mention a variety of good uſes which may call for the conſideration of thoſe whom God has in this reſpect diſtinguiſhed by an ability to do good. To aſſiſt the hints I am to offer, look round in the neighbourhood in which you live. Think how many honeſt and induſtrious, perhaps, too, I might add, religious people, are making very hard ſhifts to ſtruggle through life. Think what a comfort that would be to them, which you might, without any inconvenience, ſpare from that abundance which God has given you. Hearken alſo to any extraordinary calls of charity which may happen, eſpecially thoſe of a public nature; and help them forward with your example and your intereſt, which, perhaps, may be of much greater importance than the ſum which you contribute, conſidered in itſelf. Have a tongue to plead for the neceſſitous, as well as a hand to relieve them; and endeavour to diſcountenance thoſe poor, ſhameful excuſes, which covetouſneſs often dictates to thoſe whoſe art may indeed ſet ſome varniſh on what they ſuggeſt, but ſo ſlight a one, that the coarſe ground will appear through it. See how many poor children are wandering, naked and ignorant, about the ſtreets, and in the way to all kinds of vice and miſery; and conſider what can be done towards clothing ſome of them at leaſt, and inſtructing them in the principles of religion. Would every thriving family in a town, which is able to afford help on ſuch occaſions, caſt a pitying eye on one poor family in its neighbourhood, and take it under their patronage, to aſſiſt in feeding, and clothing, and teaching the children, in ſupporting it in affliction, in defending it from wrongs, and in adviſing thoſe that have the management of it, as circumſtances may require, how great a difference would ſoon be produced in the appearance of things amongſt us? Obſerve who are ſick, that if there be no public infirmary at hand to which you can introduce them (where your contribution will yield the largeſt increaſe) you may do ſomething towards reliev-

ing them at home, and supplying them with advice and medicines, as well as with proper diet and attendance. Consider also the spiritual necessities of men; in providing for which, I would particularly recommend to you the very important and noble charity of assisting young persons of genius and piety with what is necessary to support the expense of their education for the ministry, in a proper course of grammatical or academical studies. And grudge not some proportion of what God hath given you to those, who, resigning all temporal views to minister to you the gospel of Christ, have surely an equitable claim to be supported by you, in a capacity of rendering you those services, however laborious, to which, for your sakes, and that of your common Lord, they have devoted their lives. And while you are so abundantly *satisfied with the goodness of God's house, even of his holy temple*, have compassion on those who dwell in a desert land; and rejoice to do something towards sending among the distant nations of the heathen world, that glorious gospel, which hath so long continued unknown to multitudes, though the knowledge of it with becoming regard, be life everlasting. These are a few important charities, which I would point out to those whom Providence has enriched with its peculiar bounties; and it renders gold more precious than it could appear in any other light, that it is capable of being employed for such purposes. But if you should not have gold to spare for them, contribute your silver; or, as a farthing or a mite is not overlooked by God when it is given from a truly generous and charitable heart, let that be cheerfully dropped into the treasury, when richer offerings cannot be afforded.

12. And that, amidst so many pressing demands for charity, you may be better furnished to answer them, seriously reflect on your manner of living. I say not that God requires you should become one of the many poor relieved out of your income. The support of society, as at present established, will not only permit, but require, that some persons should allow themselves in the elegancies and delights of life; by furnishing which, multitudes of poor families are much more creditably and comfortably subsisted, with greater advantage to themselves, and safety to the public, than they could be if the price of their labours, or of the commodities in which they deal, were to be given

them as an alms; nor can I imagine it grateful to God, that his gifts ſhould be refuſed, as if they were meant for ſnares and curſes rather than benefits. This were to fruſtrate the benevolent purpoſes of the gracious Father of mankind, and, if carried to its rigour, would be a ſort of conſpiracy againſt the whole ſyſtem of nature. Let the bounties of Providence be uſed; but let us carefully ſee to it that it be in a moderate and prudent manner, leſt, by our own folly, that which ſhould have been for our welfare become a trap. Let conſcience ſay, my dear reader, with regard to yourſelf, what proportion of the good things you poſſeſs, your heavenly Father intends for yourſelf, and what for your brethren; and live not as if you had no brethren, as if pleaſing yourſelf, in all the magnificence and luxury you can deviſe, were the end for which you were ſent into the world. I fear this is the exceſs of the preſent age, and not an exceſs of rigour and mortification. Examine, therefore, your expenſes, and compare them with your income. That may be ſhamefully extravagant in you, which may not only be pardonable, but commendable in another of ſuperior eſtate. Nor can you be ſure that you do not exceed, merely becauſe you do not plunge yourſelf in debt, nor render yourſelf incapable of laying up any thing for your family. If you be diſabled from doing any thing for the poor, or any thing proportionable to your rank in life, by that genteel and elegant way of living which you affect, God muſt diſapprove of ſuch a conduct; and you ought, as you will anſwer it to him, to retrench it. And though the divine indulgence will undoubtedly be exerciſed to thoſe, in whom there is a ſincere principle of faith in Chriſt, and undiſſembled love to God and man, though it act not to that height of beneficence and uſefulneſs which might have been attained; yet be aſſured of this, that he who rendereth to every man according to his works, will have a ſtrict regard to the degrees of goodneſs in the diſtribution of final rewards! So that every neglected opportunity draws after it an irreparable loſs, which will go into eternity along with you. And let me add, too, that every inſtance of negligence indulged, renders the mind ſtill more and more indolent and weak, and conſequently more indiſpoſed to recover the ground which has been loſt, or even to maintain that which has hitherto been kept.

13. Complain not, that this is impoſing hard things upon you. I am only directing your pleaſures into a nobler channel; and indeed that frugality, which is the ſource of ſuch a generoſity, far from being at all injurious to your reputation, will rather, amongſt wiſe and good men, greatly promote it. But you have far nobler motives before you than thoſe which ariſe from their regards. I ſpeak to you as to a child of God, and a member of Chriſt; as joined, therefore, by the moſt intimate union to all the pooreſt of thoſe that believe in him. I ſpeak to you as to an heir of eternal glory, who ought therefore to have ſentiments, great and ſublime, in ſome proportion to that expected inheritance.

14. Caſt about, therefore, in your thoughts, what good is to be done, and what you can do, either in your own perſon, or by your intereſt with others; and go about it with reſolution, as in the name and preſence of the Lord. And as the Lord giveth wiſdom, and out of his mouth cometh knowledge and underſtanding, go to the footſtool of his throne, and there ſeek that guidance and that grace which may ſuit your preſent circumſtances, and may be effectual to produce the fruits of holineſs and uſefulneſs, to his more abundant glory, and to the honour of your Chriſtian profeſſion.

The eſtabliſhed Chriſtian breathing after more extenſive Uſefulneſs.

O BOUNTIFUL FATHER, and ſovereign Author of good, whether natural or ſpiritual! I bleſs thee for the various talents with which thou haſt enriched ſo undeſerving a creature as I muſt acknowledge myſelf to be. My ſoul is in the deepeſt confuſion before thee, when I conſider to how little purpoſe I have hitherto improved them! Alas! what have I done, in proportion to what thou mighteſt reaſonably have expected, with the gifts of nature which thou haſt beſtowed upon me, with my capacities of life, with my time, with my talents, with my poſſeſſions, with my influence over others! Alas! through my own negligence and folly, I look back on a barren wilderneſs, where I might have ſeen a fruitful field, and a ſpringing harveſt!

Juſtly do I indeed deſerve to be ſtripped of all, to be brought to an immediate account for all, to be condemned as in many reſpects unfaithful to thee, and to the world, and to my own ſoul; and, in conſequence of that condemnation, to be caſt into the priſon of eternal darkneſs! But thou, Lord, haſt freely forgiven the dreadful debt of ten thouſand talents. Adored be thy name for it! Accept, O Lord, accept that renewed ſurrender, which I would now make of myſelf, and of all I have unto thy ſervice! I acknowledge that it is *of thine own that I give thee;* make me, I beſeech thee, a faithful ſteward for my great Lord! And may I think of no ſeparate intereſt of my own, in oppoſition to thine!

I adore thee, O thou God of all grace, if, while I am thus ſpeaking to thee, I feel the love of thy creatures ariſing in my ſoul; if I feel my heart opening to embrace my brethren of mankind! O make me thy faithful almoner, in diſtributing to them all that thou haſt lodged in mine hand for their relief! And in determining what is my own ſhare, may I hold the balance with an equal hand, and judge impartially between myſelf and them! The proportion thou alloweſt may I thankfully take for myſelf, and thoſe who are immediately mine! The reſt may I diſtribute with wiſdom, and fidelity, and cheerfulneſs! Guide mine hand, O ever merciful Father, while thou doſt me the honour to make me thine inſtrument in dealing out a few of thy bounties, that I may beſtow them where they are moſt needed, and where they will anſwer the beſt end! And if it be thy gracious will, do thou *multiply the ſeed ſown;* proſper me in my worldly affairs, that I may have more to impart to them that need it; and thus lead me on to the regions of everlaſting plenty and everlaſting benevolence! There may I meet with many to whom I have been an affectionate benefactor on earth; and if it be thy bleſſed will, with many whom I have alſo been the means of conducting into the path to that bliſsful abode! There may they entertain me in their habitations of glory! And, in time and eternity, do thou, Lord, accept the praiſe of all, through Jeſus Chriſt; at whoſe feet I would bow; and at whoſe feet, after the moſt uſeful courſe, I would at laſt die, with as much humility as if I were then exerting the firſt act of faith upon him, and had never had any opportunity, by

one tribute of obedience and gratitude in the ſervices of life, to approve its ſincerity!

CHAP. XXIX.

The Chriſtian rejoicing in the Views of Death and Judgment.

Death and Judgment are near, but the Chriſtian has reaſon to welcome both, 1. Yet nature recoils from the ſolemnity of them, 2. An attempt to reconcile the mind, [I.] To the proſpect of death, 3. from the conſideration, (1.) Of the many evils that ſurround us in this mortal life, 4. (2.) Of the remainder of ſin which we feel within us, 5. and, (3.) Of the happineſs which is immediately to ſucceed death, 6, 7. All which might make the Chriſtian willing to die in the moſt agreeable circumſtances of human life, 8. [II.] The Chriſtian has reaſon to rejoice in the proſpect of judgment, 9. Since, however awful it be, Chriſt will then come to vindicate his honour, to diſplay his glory, and to triumph over his enemies, 10. As alſo to complete the happineſs of every believer, 11. And of the whole church, 12, 13. The meditation of a Chriſtian, whoſe heart is warm with theſe proſpects.

1. WHEN the viſions of the Lord were cloſed upon John, the beloved diſciple, in the iſland of Patmos, it is obſervable, that he who gave him that revelation, even Jeſus, the faithful and true witneſs, concludes with thoſe lively and important words, *He who teſtifieth theſe things, ſaith, Surely, I come quickly;* and John anſwers, with the greateſt readineſs and pleaſure, *Amen, even ſo come, Lord Jeſus.* Come as thou haſt ſaid, ſurely and quickly! And remember, O Chriſtian, whoever you are, now reading theſe words, your divine Lord ſpeaks in the ſame language to you; *Behold, I come quickly.* Yes, very quickly will he come by death, to turn the key, to open the door of the grave for thine admittance thither, and to lead thee through it into the now unknown regions of the inviſible world. Nor is it long before the Judge who *ſtandeth at the door*, will appear alſo to the univerſal judgment; and though perhaps not only ſcores but hundreds of years may lie between that period and the preſent moment, yet it is but a very ſmall point of time to him, who views at once all the unmeaſurable ages of a paſt and future eternity. *A thouſand years are*

with him but as one day, and one day as a thousand years. In both these senses then does he come quickly; and I trust you can answer, with a glad *Amen*, that the warning is not terrible or unpleasant to your ears, but rather that his coming, his certain, his speedy coming is the object of your delightful hope and of your long expectation.

2. I am sure it is reasonable it should be so, and yet perhaps nature, fond of life, and unwilling to part with a long-known abode, to enter on a state to which it is entirely a stranger, may recoil from the thoughts of dying; or, struck with the awful pomp of an expiring and dissolving world, may look on the judgment day with some mixture of terror. And therefore, my dear brother in the Lord (for as such I can now esteem you) I would reason with you a little on this head, and would entreat you to look more attentively on this solemn object, which will, I trust, grow less disagreeable to you, as it is more familiarly viewed. Nay, I hope, that instead of starting back from it, you will rather spring forward towards it with joy and delight.

3. Think, O Christian, when Christ comes to call you away by death, he comes to set you at liberty from your present sorrows, to deliver you from your struggles with remaining corruption, and to receive you to dwell with him in complete holiness and joy. You shall *be absent from the body, and be present with the Lord.*

4. He will indeed call you away from this world. But O, what is this world, that you should be fond of it, and cling to it with so much eagerness! How low are all those enjoyments that are peculiar to it! And how many its vexations, its snares, and its sorrows! Review your pilgrimage thus far; and though you must acknowledge *that goodness and mercy have followed you all the days of your life*, yet has not that very mercy itself planted some thorns in your paths, and given you some wise and necessary, yet painful intimations, that *this is not your rest?* Review the monuments of your withered joys, of your blasted hopes; if there be yet any monuments of them remaining, more than a mournful remembrance which they have left behind in your afflicted heart. Look upon the graves that have swallowed up many of your dearest and most amiable friends, perhaps

in the very bloom of life, and in the greateſt intimacy of your converſe with them; and reflect, that if you hold it out a few years more, death will renew its conqueſts at your expenſe, and devour the moſt precious of thoſe that yet ſurvive. View the living as well as the dead; behold the ſtate of human nature, under the many grievous marks of its apoſtaſy from God, and ſay, whether a wiſe and good man would with to continue always here. Were I myſelf ſecure from being reached by any of the arrows that fly around me, I could not but mourn to ſee the wounds that are given by them, and to hear the groans of thoſe that are continually falling under them. The diſeaſes and calamities of mankind are ſo many, and, which is moſt grievous of all, the diſtempers of their minds are ſo various and ſo threatening, that the world appears almoſt like an hoſpital; and a man, whoſe heart is tender, is ready to feel his ſpirits broken as he walks through it, and ſurveys the ſad ſcene; eſpecially when he ſees how little he can do for the recovery of thoſe whom he pities. Are you a Chriſtian, and does it not pierce your heart to ſee how human nature is ſunk in vice and in ſhame? To ſee with what amazing inſolence ſome are making themſelves openly vile, and how the name of Chriſt is diſhonoured by many too that call themſelves his people? To ſee the unlawful deeds and filthy practices of them that live ungodly, and to behold, at the ſame time, the infirmities at leaſt, and irregularities of thoſe, concerning whom we have better hopes? And do you not with to eſcape from ſuch a world, where a righteous and compaſſionate ſoul muſt be vexed from day to day by ſo many ſpectacles of ſin and miſery?

5. Yea, to come nearer home; do you not feel ſomething within you which you long to quit, and which would embitter even paradiſe itſelf? Something which, were it to continue, would grieve and diſtreſs you even in the ſociety of the bleſſed? Do you not feel a remainder of indwelling ſin; the ſad conſequence of the original revolt of our nature from God? Are you not ſtruggling every day with ſome reſidue of corruption, or at leaſt mourning on account of the weakneſs of your graces? Do you not often find your ſpirits dull and languid when you would deſire to raiſe them with the greateſt fervour in the ſervice of God? Do you not find your hearts too often inſenſible

of the richeſt inſtances of his love, and your hands feeble in his ſervice, even when *to will is preſent with you?* Does not your life, in its beſt days and hours, appear a low, unprofitable thing, when compared with what you are ſenſible it ought to be, and with what you wiſh that it were? Are you not frequently ſtretching the pinions of the mind, and ſaying, *O that I had wings like a dove, that I might fly away and be at reſt.*

6. Should you not then rejoice in the thought that Jeſus comes to deliver you from theſe complaints? That he comes to anſwer your wiſhes, and to fulfil the largeſt deſires of your hearts; thoſe deſires that he himſelf has inſpired? That he comes to open upon you a world of purity and joy, of active, exalted, and unwearied ſervices?

7. O Chriſtians, how often have you caſt a longing eye towards thoſe happy ſhores, and wiſhed to paſs the ſea, the boiſterous, unpleaſant, dangerous ſea, that ſeparates you from them? When your Lord has condeſcended to make you a ſhort viſit in his ordinances on earth, how have you bleſt the time and the place, and pronounced it, amidſt any other diſadvantage of ſituation, to be the very gate of heaven? And is it ſo delightful to behold this gate, and will it not be much more ſo to enter into it? Is it ſo delightful to receive the viſits of Jeſus for an hour, and will it not be infinitely more ſo to dwell with him forever? *Lord*, may you well ſay, *when I dwell with thee, I ſhall dwell in holineſs, for thou thyſelf art holineſs; I ſhall dwell in love, for thou thyſelf art love; I ſhall dwell in joy, for thou art the fountain of joy*, as *thou art in the Father, and the Father in thee.* Bid welcome to his approach, therefore, to take you at your word, and to fulfil to you that ſaying of his, on which your ſoul has ſo often reſted with heavenly peace and pleaſure; *Father, I will, that they whom thou haſt given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou haſt given me.*

8. Surely you may ſay in this view, the ſooner Chriſt comes the better. What though the reſidue of your days be cut off in the midſt! What though you leave many expected pleaſures in life untaſted, and many ſchemes unaccompliſhed? Is it not enough that what is taken from a mortal life ſhall be added to a glorious eternity; and that you ſhall ſpend thoſe days and years in the preſence and ſervice of Chriſt in heaven, which you might otherwiſe have

ſpent with him and for him in the imperfect enjoyments and labours of earth?

9. But your proſpects reach not only beyond death, but beyond the ſeparate ſtate. For with regard to his final appearance to judgment, our Lord ſays, *Surely I come quickly*, in the ſenſe illuſtrated before; and ſo it will appear to us, if we compare this interval of time with the bliſsful eternity which is to ſucceed it, and probably if we compare it with thoſe ages which have already paſſed, ſince the ſun began to meaſure out to earth its days and its years. And will you not here alſo ſing your part in the joyful anthem, *Amen, even ſo come, Lord Jeſus!*

10. It is true, Chriſtian, it is an awful day; a day in which nature ſhall be thrown into a confuſion as yet unknown. No earthquake, no eruption of burning mountains, no deſolations of cities by devouring flames, or of countries by overflowing rivers or ſeas, can give any juſt emblem of that dreadful day; when *the heavens being on fire ſhall be diſſolved*, as well *as the earth, and all that is therein, ſhall be burnt up*; when all nature ſhall flee away in amazement *before the face of the univerſal Judge*, and there ſhall be a great cry, far beyond what was known in the land of Egypt, when *there was not a houſe in which there was not one dead*. Your fleſh may be ready to tremble at the view; yet your ſpirit will ſurely rejoice in *God your Saviour*. You may juſtly ſay, "Let this illuſtrious day come, even with all its horrors!" Yea, like the Chriſtians deſcribed by the apoſtle, you may be looking for and haſting to that day of terrible brightneſs and univerſal doom. For your Lord will then come to vindicate the juſtice of thoſe proceedings, which have been in many inſtances ſo much obſcured, and becauſe they have been obſcured, have been alſo blaſphemed. He will come to diſplay his magnificence, deſcending from heaven *with a ſhout, with the voice of the arch-angel, and with the trump of God*, taking his ſeat upon a throne infinitely exceeding that of earthly, or even of celeſtial princes, clothed with *his Father's glory and his own*, ſurrounded with a numberleſs hoſt of *ſhining attendants*, when *coming to be glorified in his ſaints, and admired in all them that believe*. His enemies ſhall alſo be produced to grace his triumph; the ſerpent ſhall be ſeen there rolling in the duſt, and trodden under foot by him and by all his ſervants; thoſe who once condemn-

ed him, shall tremble at his presence; and those who bowed the knee before him in profane mockery, shall, in wild despair, *call to the mountains to fall upon them, and to the rocks to hide them from the face of that Lamb of God*, whom they once led away to the most inhuman slaughter.

11. O Christian, does not your loyal heart bound at the thought? And are you not ready, even while you read these lines, to begin the victorious shout in which you are then to join? He justly expects that your thoughts should be greatly elevated and impressed with the views of his triumph; but at the same time he permits you to remember your own personal share in the joy and glory of that blessed day; and even now he has the view before him of what his power and love shall then accomplish for your salvation. And what shall it not accomplish? He shall come to break the bars of the grave, and to re-animate your sleeping clay. Your bodies must indeed be laid in the dust, and be lodged there as a testimony of God's displeasure against sin; against the first sin that was ever committed, from the sad consequences of which the dearest of his children cannot be exempted. But you shall then have an ear to hear the voice of the Son of God, and an eye to behold the lustre of his appearance; and shall *shine forth like the sun* arising in the clear heaven, *which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber*. Your soul shall be new dressed to grace this high solemnity; and be clothed, not with the rags of mortality, but with the robes of glory; for *he shall change this vile body, to fashion it like his own glorious body*. And when you are thus royally arrayed, he shall confer public honours on you, and on all his people, before the assembled world. You may now perhaps be loaded with infamy, called by reproachful names, and charged with crimes, or with views which your very soul abhors; but he will then *bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your salvation as a lamp that burneth*. Though you have been dishonoured by men, you shall be acknowledged by God; and though treated as *the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things*, he will show that he regards you *as his treasure, in the day that he makes up his jewels*. When he shall *put away all the wicked of the world like dross*, you shall be pronounced righteous in that full assembly; and though indeed you have broken the divine law, and might in strict justice have been con-

demned, yet being clothed with the righteouſneſs of the great Redeemer, even *that righteouſneſs which is of God by faith*, juſtice itſelf ſhall acquit you, and join with mercy in *beſtowing upon you a crown of life*. Chriſt will *confeſs you before men and angels*, will pronounce you *good and faithful ſervants, and call you to enter into the joy of your Lord*; he will ſpeak of you with endearment as his brethren, and will acknowledge the kindneſſes which have been ſhown to you as if he had received them in his own perſon. Yea, then ſhall you, O Chriſtian, who may perhaps have ſat in ſome of the loweſt places in our aſſemblies, and although none of the rich and great of the earth would condeſcend to look upon or to ſpeak to you, be called to be aſſeſſors with Chriſt on his judgment-ſeat, and to join with him in the ſentence he ſhall paſs on wicked men, and rebellious angels.

12. Nor is it merely one day of glory and of triumph; but when the Judge ariſes and aſcends to his Father's court, all the bleſſed ſhall aſcend with him, and you among the reſt; you ſhall aſcend, together with your Saviour, *to his Father and your Father, to his God and your God*. You ſhall go to make your appearance in the new Jeruſalem, in thoſe new ſhining forms that you have received, which will no doubt be attended with a correſpondent improvement of mind; and take up your perpetual abode in that fulneſs of joy, with which you ſhall be filled and ſatisfied *in the preſence of God*, upon the conſummation of that happineſs which the ſaints in the intermediate ſtate have been wiſhing and waiting for. You ſhall go from the ruins of a diſſolving world, to *the new heavens and new earth, wherein righteouſneſs forever dwells*. There all the number of God's elect ſhall be accompliſhed, and the happineſs of each ſhall be completed. The whole ſociety ſhall be *preſented before God as the bride, the Lamb's wife*, whom the eye of its celeſtial bridegroom ſhall ſurvey with unutterable delight, and confeſs to be *without ſpot or wrinkle, or any ſuch thing*; its character and ſtate being juſt what he originally deſigned it to be, when he firſt engaged to give himſelf for it, to *redeem it to God by his blood. So ſhall you ever be* with each other, and *with the Lord*; and immortal ages ſhall roll away, and find you ſtill unchanged; your happineſs always the ſame, and your reliſh for it the ſame; or rather ever growing,

as your souls are approaching nearer and nearer to him who is the source of happiness, and the centre of infinite perfection.

18. And now, look round about upon earth, and single out, if you can, the enjoyments or the hopes, for the sake of which you would say, Lord, delay thy coming, or for the sake of which you any more should hesitate to express your longing for it, and to cry, *Even so come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!*

The Meditation and Prayer of a Christian whose Heart is warmed with these Proposals.

O BLESSED LORD, my soul is enkindled with these views, and rises to thee in the flame. Thou hast testified thou comest quickly; and I repeat my joyful assent—*Amen, even so come, Lord Jesus.* Come, for I long to have done with this low life; to have done with its burdens, its sorrows, and its snares! Come, for I long to ascend into thy presence, and to see the court thou art holding above!

Blessed Jesus, death is transformed when I view it in this light. The king of terrors is sent no more as such, but as a messenger to carry me home, and place me near the King of glory and of grace. I hear with pleasure the sound of thy feet approaching still nearer and nearer; draw aside the veil whenever thou pleasest! Open the bars of my prison, that my eager soul may spring forth to thee, and *cast itself at thy feet; at the feet of that Jesus, whom having not seen, I love; and in whom, though now I see thee not, yet believing, I rejoice, with joy unspeakable, and full of glory! Thou, Lord, shalt show me the path of life;* thine hand shall guide me to thy blissful abode, *where there is fulness of joy, and rivers of everlasting pleasure.* Thou shalt assign me an habitation with thy faithful servants, whose separate spirits are now living with thee, while their bodies sleep in the dust. Many of them have been my companions in thy laborious work, and *in the patience and tribulation of thy kingdom;* my dear companions and my brethren; O show me, blessed Saviour, how glorious and how happy thou hast made them! Show me, to what new forms of better life thou hast conducted them,

whom we call the dead! in what nobler and more extensive services thou hast employed them, that I may praise thee better than I now can, for thy goodness to them! And O, give me to share with them in their blessings and their services, and to raise a song of grateful love, like that which they are breathing forth before thee!

Yet, O my blessed Redeemer, even there will my soul be aspiring to a yet nobler and more glorious hope; and from this as yet unknown splendour and felicity shall I be drawing new arguments, to look and long for the day of thy final appearance. There shall I long, more ardently than I now do, to see thy conduct vindicated, and thy triumph displayed; to see the dust of thy servants re-animated; and death, the last of their enemies and of thine, swallowed up in victory. I shall long for that superior honour that thou intendest me, and that complete bliss to which the whole body of thy people shall be conducted. Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly, will mingle itself with the songs of paradise, and sound from the tongues of all the millions of thy saints, whom thy grace has transplanted thither.

In the mean time, O my Divine Master, accept the homage which a grateful heart now pays thee, in a sense of the glorious hopes with which thou hast inspired it! It is thou that hast put this joy into it, and hast raised my soul to this glorious ambition; otherwise I might have now been grovelling in the lowest trifles of time and sense, and been looking with horror on that hour which is now the object of my most ardent wishes.

O be with me always, even to the end of this mortal life! and give me, while waiting for thy salvation, to be doing thy commandments! May *my loins be girded about, and my lamp burning*, and mine ears be still watchful for the blessed signal of thine arrival; that my glowing soul may with pleasure spring to meet thee, and be strengthened by death to bear those visions of glory, under the ecstasies of which, feeble mortality would now expire!

CHAP. XXX.

The Chriſtian honouring God by his Dying Behaviour.

Reflections on the ſincerity with which the preceding advices have been given, 1. The author is deſirous that (if Providence permit) he may aſſiſt the Chriſtian to die honourably and comfortably, 2, 3. With this view it is adviſed, (1.) To rid the mind of all earthly cares, 4. (2.) To review the humiliation of the ſoul before God, and its application to the blood of Chriſt, 5. (3.) To exerciſe patience under bodily pains and ſorrows, 6. (4.) At leaving the world to bear an honourable teſtimony to religion, 7. (5.) To give a ſolemn charge to ſurviving friends, 8. Especially recommending faith in Chriſt, 9. (6.) To keep the promiſes of God in view, 10, 11. and, (7.) To commit the departing ſpirit to God, in the genuine exerciſes of gratitude and repentance, faith and charity, 12. Which are exemplified in the concluding meditation and prayer.

1. THUS, my dear reader, I have endeavoured to lead you through a variety of circumſtances; and thoſe not fancied and imaginary, but ſuch as do indeed occur in the human and Chriſtian life. And I can truly and cheerfully ſay, that I have marked out to you the path which I myſelf have trod, and in which it is my deſire ſtill to go on. I have ventured my own everlaſting intereſts on that foundation on which I have directed you to adventure yours. What I have recommended as the grand buſineſs of your life, I deſire to make the buſineſs of my own; and the moſt conſiderable enjoyments which I expect or deſire, in the remaining days of my pilgrimage on earth, are ſuch as I have directed you to ſeek, and endeavoured to aſſiſt you in attaining. Such love to God, ſuch conſtant activity in his ſervice, ſuch pleaſurable views of what lies beyond the grave, appear to me (God is my witneſs) a felicity incomparably beyond any thing elſe, which can offer itſelf to our affection and purſuit; and I would not for ten thouſand worlds reſign my ſhare in them, or conſent even to the ſuſpenſion of the delights which they afford, during the remainder of my abode here.

2. I would humbly hope, through the divine bleſſing, that the hours you have ſpent in the review of theſe plain things, may have turned to ſome profitable account, and that in conſequence of what you have read, you have

either been brought into the way of life and peace, or been induced to quicken your pace in it. Moſt heartily ſhould I rejoice in being further uſeful to you, and that even to the laſt. Now there is one ſcene remaining; a ſcene through which you muſt infallibly paſs, which has ſomething in it ſo awful, that I cannot but attempt doing a little to aſſiſt you in it; I mean, the dark valley of the ſhadow of death. I would earneſtly wiſh, that for the credit of your profeſſion, the comfort of your own ſoul, and the joy and edification of your ſurviving friends, you might die not only ſafely, but honourably too; and therefore I would offer to you a few parting advices. I am ſenſible, indeed, that Providence may determine the circumſtances of your death in ſuch a manner, as that you may have no opportunity of acting upon the hints I now give you. Some unexpected accident, from without or from within, may, as it were, whirl you to heaven before you are aware; and you may find yourſelf ſo ſuddenly there, that it may ſeem a tranſlation rather than a death. Or it is poſſible the force of a diſtemper may affect your underſtanding in ſuch a manner, that you may be quite inſenſible of the circumſtances in which you are; and ſo your diſſolution (though others may ſee it viſibly and certainly approaching) may be as great a ſurpriſe to you as if you died in full health.

3. But as it is, on the whole, probable you may have a more ſenſible paſſage out of time into eternity; and as much may, in various reſpects, depend on your dying behaviour, give me leave to propoſe ſome plain directions with relation to it, to be practiſed, if God give you opportunity, and remind you of them. It may not be improper to look over the xxixth. chapter again, when you find the ſymptoms of any threatening diſorder; and I the rather hope, that what I ſay may be uſeful to you, as I find myſelf diſpoſed to addreſs you with ſomething of that peculiar tenderneſs, which we feel for a dying friend; to whom, as we expect that we ſhall ſpeak to him no more, we ſend out all our hearts in every word.

4. I would adviſe then, in the firſt place, that, as ſoon as poſſible, you would endeavour to get rid of all further care with regard to your temporal concerns, by ſettling them in time, in as reaſonable and Chriſtian a manner as

you can. I could wish there may be nothing of that kind to hurry your mind when you are least able to bear it, or to distress or divide those who come after you. Do that which, in the presence of God, you judge most equitable, and which you verily believe will be most pleasing to him. Do it in as prudent and effectual a manner as you can; and then consider the world as a place you have quite done with, and its affairs as nothing farther to you, more than to one actually dead; unless as you may do any good to its inhabitants, while you yet continue among them; and may, by any circumstance in your last actions or words in life, leave a blessing behind you to those who have been your friends and fellow-travellers, while you have been dispatching that journey through it, which you are now finishing.

5. That you may be the more at leisure, and the better prepared for this, enter into some serious review of your own state, and endeavour to put your soul into as fit a posture as possible, for your solemn appearance before God. For a solemn thing, indeed, it is, to go into his immediate presence! to stand before him, not as a supplicant at the throne of his grace, but at his bar as a separate spirit, whose time of probation is over, and whose eternal state is to be immediately determined. Renew your humiliation before God for the imperfections of your life, though it has in the main been devoted to his service. Renew your application to the mercies of God, as promised in the covenant of grace, and to the blood of Christ, as the blessed channel in which they flow. Resign yourself entirely to the divine disposal and conduct, as willing to serve God, either in this world or the other, as he shall see fit. And sensible of your sinfulness on the one hand, and of the divine wisdom and goodness on the other, summon up all the fortitude of your soul to bear, as well as you can, whatever his afflicting hand may further lay upon you, and to receive the last stroke of it, as one who would obtain the most entire subjection to the great and good Father of spirits.

6. Whatever you suffer, "endeavour to show yourself an example of patience." Let that amiable grace *have its perfect work;* and since it has so little more to do, let it close the scene nobly. Let there not be a murmuring word; and

that there may not, watch againſt every repining thought; and when you feel any thing of that kind ariſing, look by faith upon a dying Saviour, and aſk your own heart, Was not his croſs much more painful than the bed on which I lie? Was not his ſituation among blood-thirſty enemies infinitely more terrible than mine, amidſt the tenderneſs and care of ſo many affectionate friends? Did not the heavy load of my ſins preſs him in a much more overwhelming manner than I am preſſed by the load of theſe afflictions? And yet he bore all *as a lamb that is brought to the ſlaughter.* Let the remembrance of his ſufferings be a means to ſweeten yours; yea, let it cauſe you to rejoice when you are called to bear the croſs for a little while, before you wear the crown. Count it all joy that you have an opportunity yet once more of honouring God by your patience, which is now acting its laſt part, and will, in a few days, perhaps in a few hours, be ſuperſeded by complete, everlaſting bleſſedneſs. And I am willing to hope, that in theſe views you will not only ſuppreſs all paſſionate complaints, but that your mouth will be filled with the praiſes of God; and that you will be ſpeaking to thoſe that are about you, not only of his juſtice, but of his goodneſs too. So that you will be enabled to communicate your inward joys in ſuch a manner, as may be a lively and edifying comment upon theſe words of the apoſtle—*Tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; even a hope which maketh not aſhamed, while the love of God is ſhed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghoſt, which is given unto us.*

7. And now, my dear friend, now is the time, when it is eſpecially expected from you that you bear an honourable teſtimony to religion. Tell thoſe that are about you, as well as you can (for you will never be able fully to expreſs it) what comfort and ſupport you have found in it. Tell them how it has brightened the darkeſt circumſtances of your life; tell them how it now reconciles you to the near views of death. Your words will carry with them a peculiar weight at ſuch a ſeaſon; there will be a kind of eloquence, even in the infirmities with which you are ſtruggling, while you give them utterance; and you will be heard with attention, with tenderneſs, with credit. And therefore, when the time of your departure is at hand,

with unaffected freedom breathe out your joy, if you then feel (as I hope you will) an holy joy and delight in God; breathe out, however, your inward peace and serenity of mind, if you be then peaceful and serene; others will mark it, and be encouraged to tread the steps which lead to so happy an end. Tell them what you feel of the vanity of the world, and they may learn to regard it less; tell them what you feel of the substantial supports of the gospel, and they may learn to value it more; for they cannot but know that they must lie down upon a dying bed too, and must then need all the relief which the gospel itself can give them.

8. And, to enforce the conviction the more, give a solemn charge to those that are about you, that they spend their lives in the service of God, and govern themselves by the principles of real religion. You may remember that Joshua, and David, and other good men did so, when they perceived that the days drew near in which they should die. And you know not how the admonitions of a dying friend, or (as it may be with respect to some) of a dying parent, may impress those who may have disregarded what you and others may have said to them before. At least, make the trial; die labouring to glorify God, to save souls, and generously to sow the seeds of goodness and happiness in a world where you have no more harvests to reap. Perhaps they may spring up in a plentiful crop when the clods of the valley are covering your body; but if not, God will approve it; and the angels that wait around your bed to receive your departing soul, will look upon each other with marks of approbation in their countenance, and own that this is to expire like a Christian, and to make a glorious improvement of mortality.

9. And, in this last address to your fellow mortals, whoever they are that Providence brings near you, be sure that you tell how entirely and how cheerfully your hopes and dependence in this season of the last extremity are fixed, not upon your own merits and obedience, but on what the great Redeemer has done and suffered for sinners. Let them see that you die at the foot of the cross: nothing will be so comfortable to yourself, nothing so edifying to them. Let the name of Jesus, therefore, be in

your mouth, while you are able to ſpeak; and when you can ſpeak no longer, let it be in your heart, and endeavour that the laſt act of your ſoul, while it continues in the body, may be an act of humble faith in Chriſt. Come unto God by him; enter into that which is within the veil, as with the blood of ſprinkling freſh upon you. It is an awful thing for ſuch a ſinner (as you, my Chriſtian friend, with all the virtues the world may have admired, know yourſelf to be) to ſtand before that infinitely pure and holy Being, who has ſeen all your ways, and all your heart, and has a perfect knowledge of every mixture of imperfection which has attended the beſt of your duties; but venture in that way, and you will find it both ſafe and pleaſant.

10. Once more. To give you comfort in a dying hour, and to ſupport your feeble ſteps while you are travelling through this dark and painful way, take the word of God as a ſtaff in your hand. Let books and mortal friends now do their laſt office for you. Call, if you can, ſome experienced Chriſtian, who has felt the power of the word of God upon his own heart; and let him bring the ſcripture, and turn you to ſome of thoſe precious promiſes, which have been the food and rejoicing of his own ſoul. It is with this view, that I may carry the good office I am now engaged in as far as poſſible, I ſhall here give you a collection of a few ſuch admirable ſcriptures, each of them infinitely *more valuable than thouſands of gold and ſilver*. And to convince you of the degree in which I eſteem them, I will take the freedom to add, that I deſire they may (if God give an opportunity) be read over to me, as I lie on my dying bed, with ſhort intervals between them, that I may pauſe upon each, and renew ſomething of that delightful reliſh, which, I bleſs God, I have often found in them. May your ſoul and mine be then compoſed to a ſacred ſilence (whatever may be the commotion of animal nature) while the voice of God ſpeaks to us in language which he ſpoke to his ſervants of old, or in which he inſtructed them how they ſhould ſpeak to him, in circumſtances of the greateſt extremity!

11. Can any more encouragement be wanting, when he ſays,—*Fear not, for I am with thee; be not diſmayed, for I am thy God: I will ſtrengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea, I*

will uphold thee, with the right hand of my righteousness.—And he is not a man, that he should lie, nor the son of man, that he should repent! Hath he said, and shall he not do it? Or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?—The Lord is my light, and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?—This God is our God forever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death.—Therefore, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.—I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord.—O continue thy loving-kindness unto them that know thee, and thy righteousness to the upright in heart! For with thee is the fountain of life; in thy light shall we see light.—Thou wilt shew me the path of life; in thy presence is fulness of joy, at thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore.—As for me, I shall behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.—For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded, that he is able to keep what I have committed to him until that day.—Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth; my flesh also shall rest in hope.—For if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again; those also that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.—I give unto my sheep eternal life, said Jesus the good Shepherd, *and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.—This is the will of him that sent me, that every one that believeth on me should have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.—Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.—Go, tell my brethren, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God and your God.—Father, I will, that those whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me; that the love wherewith thou hast loved me, may be in them, and I in them.—He that testifieth these things, saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen, even so come, Lord Jesus.—O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, who has given us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

12. Thus may that God, *who knows the souls of his children in all their adversities*, and in whose sight *the death of his saints is precious*, cheer and support you and me in those last extremities of nature! May he add us to the happy number of those who have been more than conquerors in death! And may he give us those supplies of his Spirit, which may enable us to pour out our departing souls in such sentiments as those I would now suggest! Though we should be no longer able to utter words, or to understand them if they were to be read to us; let us at least review them with all proper affections now, and lay up one prayer more for that awful moment! O that this, and all we have ever offered with regard to it, *may then come in remembrance before God.*

Meditation and Prayer suited to the Case of a dying Christian.

O THOU Supreme Ruler of the visible and invisible worlds! Thou Sovereign of life and of death, of earth and of heaven! Blessed be thy name, I have often been taught to seek thee. And now once more do I pour out my soul, my departing soul unto thee. Bow down thy gracious ear, O God, and let my cry come before thee with acceptance!

The hour is come when thou wilt separate me from this world, with which I have been so long and so familiary acquainted, and lead me to another as yet unknown. Enable me, I beseech thee, to make the exchange as becomes a child of Abraham, who, being *called of thee to receive an inheritance, obeyed, and went out, though he knew not particularly whither he went;* as becomes a child of God, who knows that, through sovereign grace, *it is his Father's good pleasure to give him the kingdom.*

I acknowledge, O Lord, the justice of that sentence by which I am expiring; and own thy wisdom and goodness in appointing my journey through this gloomy vale which is now before me. Help me to turn it into the happy occasion of honouring thee, and adorning my profession!

And I will bleſs the pangs by which thou art glorified, when this mortal and ſinful part of my nature is diſſolved.

Gracious Father, I would not quit this earth of thine, and this houſe of clay in which I have ſojourned during my abode upon the face of it, without my grateful acknowledgments to thee, for all that abundant goodneſs which thou haſt cauſed to paſs before me here. With my dying breath I bear witneſs to thy faithful care. I have wanted no good thing. I thank thee, O my God, that this guilty, forfeited, unprofitable life was ſo long ſpared; that it has been ſtill maintained by ſuch a rich variety of thy bounty. I thank thee that thou haſt made this beginning of my exiſtence ſo pleaſant to me. I thank thee for the mercies of my days and nights, of my months and years, which are now come to their period. I thank thee for the mercies of my infancy, and for thoſe of my riper age; for all the agreeable friends which thou haſt given me in this houſe of my pilgrimage, the living and the dead; for all the help I have received from others, and for all the opportunities which thou haſt given me of being helpful to the bodies or ſouls of my brethren of mankind.—Surely goodneſs and mercy have followed me all the days of my life, and I have reaſon to riſe a thankful gueſt, from the various and pleaſant entertainments with which my table has been furniſhed by thee. Nor ſhall I have reaſon to repine, or to grieve, at quitting them; for, O my God, are thy bounties exhauſted? I know that they are not. I will not wrong thy goodneſs and thy faithfulneſs ſo much as to imagine, that becauſe I am going from this earth, I am going from happineſs. I adore thy mercy, that thou haſt taught me to entertain nobler views through Jeſus thy Son. I bleſs thee, with all the powers of my nature, that I ever heard of his name, and of his death; and would fain exert a more vigorous act of thankful adoration, than in this broken ſtate I am capable of, while I am extolling thee for the riches of thy grace manifeſted in him; for his inſtructions and his example, for his blood and his righteouſneſs, and for that bleſſed Spirit of thine which thou haſt given me, to turn my ſinful heart unto thyſelf, and to bring me into the bonds of thy covenant; of that covenant, which is *ordered in all things and ſure*,

and which this death, though now separating my soul from my body, shall never be able to dissolve.

I bless thee, O Lord, that I am not dying in an unregenerate and impenitent state! but that thou didst graciously awaken and convince me; that thou didst renew and sanctify my heart, and didst by thy good Spirit work in it an unfeigned faith, a real repentance, and the beginning of a divine life. I thank thee for ministers and ordinances; I thank thee for my sabbaths, and my sacrament days; for the weekly and monthly refreshments which they gave me. I thank thee for the fruits of Canaan, which were sent me in the wilderness, and are now sent me on the brink of Jordan. I thank thee for thy blessed word, and for these exceeding rich and precious promises of it, which now lie as a cordial warm at my heart in this chilling hour; promises of support in death, and of glory beyond it, and of the resurrection of my body to everlasting life. O my God, I firmly believe them all, great and wonderful as they are, and am *waiting for the accomplishment of them through Jesus Christ; in whom they are all yea and amen. Remember thy word unto thy servant, on which thou hast caused me to hope!* I covenanted with thee not for worldly enjoyments, which thy love taught me comparatively to despise; but for eternal life, as *a gift of thy free grace, through Jesus Christ my Lord;* and now permit me, in his name, to enter my humble claim to it! Permit me to consign this departing spirit into thine hand; for *thou hast redeemed it, O Lord God of truth; I am thine, save me,* and make me happy!

But may I indeed presume to say, I am thine! O God? Now I am standing on the borders of both worlds; now I view things as in the light of thy presence and of eternity; how unworthy do I appear, that I should be taken to dwell with thy angels and saints in glory! Alas, I have reason to look back with deep humiliation on a poor, unprofitable, sinful life, in which I have daily been deserving to be cast into hell. But I have this one comfortable reflection, that I have fled to the cross of Christ, and I now renew my application to it. To think of appearing before God in such an imperfect righteousness as my own, were ten thousand times worse than death. No, Lord! I come unto thee as a sinner; but as a sinner who has believed

in thy Son for pardon and life. I fall down before thee as a guilty, polluted wretch; but thou haſt made him to be unto thy people for wiſdom and righteouſneſs, for ſanctification and redemption. Let me have my lot among the followers of Jeſus! Treat me as thou treateſt thoſe who are his friends and his brethren! For thou knoweſt that my ſoul has loved him, and truſted on him, and ſolemnly ventured itſelf on the ſecurity of his goſpel. And *I know whom I have believed.* The infernal lion may attempt to diſmay me in this awful paſſage; but I rejoice that I am in the hands of the good Sheherd; and I defy all my ſpiritual enemies, in a cheerful dependence on his faithful care. I lift up my eyes and my heart to him, who *was dead and is alive again; and behold he lives forevermore, and hath the keys of death, and of the unſeen world.* Bleſſed Jeſus, I die by thine hand, and I fear no harm from the hand of a Saviour! I fear not that death which is allotted to me by the hand of my deareſt Lord, who himſelf died to make it ſafe and happy. I come, Lord, I come, not only with a willing, but with a joyful conſent. I thank thee that thou remembereſt me for good; that thou art breaking my chains, and calling me to *the glorious liberty of the children of God.* I thank thee, that thou wilt no longer permit me to live at a diſtance from thine arms; but after this long abſence, wilt have me at home, at home forever.

My feeble nature faints in the view of that glory, which is now dawning upon me; but thou knoweſt how, gracious Lord, to let it in upon my ſoul by juſt degrees, and to *make thy ſtrength perfect in my weakneſs.* Once more, for the laſt time, would I look down on this poor world, which I am going to quit, and breathe out my dying vows for its proſperity and that of thy church in it. I have loved it, O Lord, as a living member of thy body; and I love it to the laſt. I humbly beſeech thee, therefore, that thou wilt guard it, and purify it, and unite it more and more! Send down more of thy bleſſed Spirit upon it, even the Spirit of wiſdom, of holineſs, and of love; till in due time *the wilderneſs be turned into a garden of the Lord, and all fleſh ſhall ſee thy ſalvation.*

And as for me, bear me, O my heavenly Father, on the wings of everlaſting love, to that peaceful, that holy, and joyous abode, which thy mercy has prepared for me, and

which the blood of my Redeemer hath purchaſed! Bear me *to the general aſſembly and church of the firſt-born, to the innumerable company of angels, and to the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect.* And whatever this fleſh may ſuffer, let my ſteady ſoul be delightfully fixed on that glory to which it is raiſed! Let faith perform its laſt office in an honourable manner! Let my few remaining moments on earth be ſpent for thy glory; and ſo let me aſcend, with love in my heart, and praiſe on my faultering tongue, to the world where love and praiſe ſhall be complete! Be this my laſt ſong on earth, which I am going to tune in heaven: *Bleſſing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto Him that ſitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb forever and ever!—Amen.*

THE END.

A

SERMON,

Preached at MAIDWELL, in *Northamptonshire*,

JUNE 22, 1735.

By PHILIP DODDRIDGE, D. D.

LUKE x. 42.——*One thing is needful.*

IT was the amiable character of our blessed Redeemer, that *he went about doing good.* This great motive, which animated all his actions, brought him to the house of his friend Lazarus at Bethany, and directed his behaviour there. Though it was a season of recess from public labour, our Lord brought the sentiments and the pious cares of a preacher of righteousness into the parlour of a friend; and there his doctrine dropped as the rain, and distilled as the dew, on the little happy circle that were then surrounding him. Mary, the sister of Lazarus, with great delight made one amongst them; she sat herself down at the feet of Jesus, in the posture of an humble disciple; and we have a great deal of reason to believe, that Martha, his other sister, would gladly have been with her there; but domestic care pressed hard upon her, and she was cumbered with much serving, being perhaps too solicitous to prepare a sumptuous entertainment for her heavenly Master, and the train that attended him. Happy are they that in a crowd of business do not lose something of the spirituality of their minds, and of the composure and sweetness of their tempers! This good woman comes to our Lord with too impatient a complaint; insinuating some little reflection, not only on Mary, but on himself too. *Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me.* Our Lord, willing to take all op-

portunities of suggesting useful thoughts, answers her in these words, of which the text is a part. *Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful; and Mary has chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her;* q. d. Alas, Martha! the concerns of the soul are of so much greater importance than those of the body, that I cannot blame your sister on this occasion; I rather recommend her to your imitation, and caution you, and all my other friends, to be much on your guard, that in the midst of your worldly cares, you do not lose the sight of that which so much better deserves your attention.

I shall consider these words, *One thing is needful*, as a kind of aphorism, or wise and weighty sentence, dropped from the mouth of our blessed Redeemer, and evidently worthy of our most serious regard. In handling them, I shall,

I. Consider what we are to understand by the one thing here spoken of.
II. Shew you what is intended when it is represented as the one thing needful.
III. I will shew how justly it may be so represented, or prove that it is indeed the one thing needful.
IV. Conclude with some reflections and application.

My friends, the words which are now before us are, to this day, as true as they were seventeen hundred years ago. Set your hearts to attend to them. O that you might, by divine grace, be awakened to hear them with a due regard, and might be so impressed with the plain and serious things which are now to be spoken, as you probably would if I were speaking by your dying beds, and you had the full exercise of your reason, and the near and lively view of eternity!

I. I am briefly to consider what we are to understand by the one thing needful.

Now, I answer in a few words, it is the care of the soul, opposed, as you see in the text, to the care, i. e. the excessive care of the body; for which Martha was gently admonished by our Lord. This is a general answer, and it comprehends a variety of important particulars, which is the business of our ministry often to open to you at large. The care of the soul implies a readiness to hear the words of Christ, to set ourselves with Mary at his feet, and to receive both the law and the gospel from his mouth. It supposes that we learn from this divine teacher the worth of our souls, their danger, and their remedy. That we become above all things solicitous about their eternal salvation. That heartily repenting of all our sins,

and cordially believing the everlasting gospel, we receive the Lord Jesus Christ for righteousness and life, resting our souls on the value of his atonement, and the efficacy of his grace. It imports the sincere dedication of ourselves to the service of God, and a faithful adherence to it, notwithstanding all the oppositions arising from inward corruptions or outward temptations, and a resolute perseverance in the way of gospel dependence, till we receive the end of our faith in our complete salvation. This is the one thing needful, represented indeed in various scriptures by various names. Sometimes it is called regeneration, or the new creature, because it is the blessed work of God's efficacious grace. Sometimes the fear of God, and sometimes his love, and the keeping his commandments; and very frequently in the New Testament it is called faith, or receiving Christ, and believing on him, which therefore is represented as the great work of God; i. e. the great thing which God in his glorious gospel requires, as well as by his Spirit produces in us. Each of these, if rightly understood and explained, comprehends all that I have said on this head. On the whole, we may say, that as the body is one, though it has many members, and the soul is one, though it has many faculties; so in the present case, this real, vital religion is one thing, one sacred principle of divine life, bringing us to attend to the care of our souls, as of our greatest treasure. It is one thing, notwithstanding all the variety of views in which it may be considered, and of characters under which it may be described. I proceed,

II. To consider what may be intended in the representation which is here made of it, as the one thing needful.

Now I think it naturally includes these three particulars; it is a matter of universal concern, of the highest importance, and of so comprehensive a nature, that every thing which is truly worthy of our regard, may be considered as included in it, or subservient to it. Let me a little illustrate each of these particulars, reserving the proof of what I now assert to the third general, where it will abundantly appear.

1. The care of the soul may be called the one thing needful, as it is matter of universal concern.

Our Lord, you see, speaks of it as needful in the general. He says not for this or that particular person, or for those of such an age, station, or circumstance in life, but needful for all. And indeed, when discoursing on such a subject, one might properly introduce it with these solemn words of the Psalmist, *Give ear, all ye people, hear, all ye inhabitants of the earth, both high and low, rich and poor together.*—For it is the concern of all, from the king that sits upon the throne, to the

servant that grindeth at the mill, or the beggar that lieth upon the dunghill. It is needful for us that are ministers, for our own salvation is concerned. And wo, insupportable wo will be to our souls, if we think it enough to recommend it to others, to talk of it in a warm or an awful manner, in public assemblies, or in our private converse; while it doth not penetrate our hearts as our own greatest care. Our case will then be like that of the Israelitish lord in Samaria, who was employed to distribute the corn when the siege was raised, seeing it with our eyes, and dispensing it with our hands, we shall ourselves die miserably, without tasting the blessings we impart. It is needful to all you that are our hearers, without the exception of one single person. It is needful to you that are rich, though it may on some accounts be peculiarly difficult for you; even as difficult, comparatively speaking, as for *a camel to go through the eye of a needle;* yet if it be neglected, you are poor in the midst of all your wealth, and miserable in all your abundance; and a wretch starving for hunger, in a magnificent palace and a rich dress, might be less the object of compassion than you. It is needful for you that are poor; though you are distressed with so many anxious cares, *what you shall eat, and what you shall drink, and wherewithal you shall be clothed.* The nature that makes you capable of such anxieties as these argues your much greater concern in the *bread which endures to eternal life*, than in that by which this mortal body must be supported. It is needful for you that are advanced in years; though your strength be impaired, so that the *grasshopper is a burden;* though you have by your long continuance in sin rendered this great work so hard, that were it less important, one would in pity let you alone without reminding you of it; yet, late as it is, it must be done, or your hoary heads will be brought down to the grave with wrath, and sink under a curse aggravated by every day of your lives. It is needful to you that are young, though solicited by so many gay vanities to neglect it; though it may be represented as an unseasonable care at present, yet I repeat it, it is needful to you; immediately needful, unless you, who walk so frequently over the dust of your brethren and companions that died in the bloom and vigour of their days, have made some secret covenant with the grave for yourselves, and found out some wonderful method hitherto unknown of securing this precarious life, and of answering for days and months to come, while others cannot answer for one single moment.

2. The care of the soul is a matter of the highest importance; beyond any thing which can be brought in comparison with it.

As Solomon says of wisdom, that it is more precious than rubies; and that all the things which can be desired are not to be compared with her; so may I properly say of this great and most important branch of wisdom, whatever can be laid in the balance with it, will be found altogether lighter than vanity. This is strongly implied when it is said in the text, one thing is needful; q. d. One thing, and one thing alone is so. Just as the blessed God is said to be *only wise* and *only holy*, because the wisdom and holiness of angels and men is as nothing when compared with his. What seems most great and most important in life, what kings and senates, what the wisest and greatest of this world are employing their time, their counsels, their pens, their labours upon, are trifles when compared with this one thing.—A man may subsist, he may in some considerable measure be happy, without learning, without riches, without titles, without health, without liberty, without friends; nay, though *the life be more than meat, and the body than raiment*, yet he may be happy, unspeakably happy, without the body itself. But he cannot be so in the neglect of the one thing needful. I must therefore bespeak your regard to it in the words of Moses, *It is not a light thing, but it is your life.*

3. The care of the soul is of so comprehensive a nature, that every thing truly worthy of our regard may be considered as included in it, or subservient to it.

As David observes that the *commandment of God is exceeding broad*, so may we say of this one thing needful; and as Solomon very justly and emphatically expresses it, to fear God and keep his commandments, is the whole of man, his whole duty, and his whole interest; and every thing which is wise and rational, does in its proper place and connexion make a part of it. We should judge very ill concerning the nature of this care, if we imagined, that it consisted merely in acts of devotion or religious contemplation; it comprehends all the lovely and harmonious bonds of social and human virtues.—It requires a care of society, a care of our bodies, and of our temporal concerns; but then all is to be regulated, directed, and animated by proper regards to God, Christ, and immortality. Our food and our rest, our trades and our labours are to be attended to, and all the offices of humanity performed in obedience to the will of God, for the glory of Christ, and in a view to the improvement of the mind in a growing meetness for a state of complete perfection. Name any thing which has no reference at all to this, and you name a worthless trifle, however it may be gilded to allure the eye, how-

ever it may be sweetened to gratify the taste. Name a thing which, instead of thus improving the soul, has a tendency to debase and pollute, to enslave and endanger it, and you name what is most unprofitable and mischievous, be the wages of iniquity ever so great; most foul and deformed, be it in the eyes of men ever so honourable, or in their customs ever so fashionable. Thus I have endeavoured to shew you what we may suppose implied in this expression of the one thing needful. I am now,

III. To shew you with how much propriety the care of the soul may be represented under this character, as the one thing needful, as a matter of universal and most serious concern, to which every thing else is to be considered as subservient, if at all worthy of our care and pursuit. Now let me appeal to the sentiments of those who must be allowed most capable of judging, and to the evident reason of the case itself, as it must appear to every unprejudiced mind.

1. Let me argue from the sentiments of those who must be allowed most capable of judging in such an affair, and we shall quickly see that the care of the soul appears to them the one thing needful.

Is the judgment of the blessed God according to truth, how evidently and how solemnly is that judgment declared? I will not say merely in this or the other particular passage of his word, but in the whole series of his revelations to the children of men; and in the whole tenour of his addresses to them. Is not this the language of all, from the early days of Job and Moses, to the conclusion of the canon of scripture? If wisdom be hid from the eyes of all the living, surely God understandeth the way thereof, he knoweth the place thereof; and if he does, it is plainly pointed out; for *unto man he still saith, Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil, that is understanding.* By Moses, therefore, he declared to the Israelites, that to do the commandments of the Lord, would be their wisdom and their understanding in the sight of the nations who should hear his statutes, and say, Surely this is a wise and understanding people. When he had raised up one man on the throne of Israel, with the character of the wisest that ever lived upon the face of the earth, he chose to make him eminently a teacher of this great truth. And now, all that he spoke on the curious and less concerning subjects of natural philosophy is lost, *though he spoke of trees from the cedar to the hyssop, and of beasts, and of fowls, and of creeping things, and of fishes;* yet that saying is preserved, in which he testifies, that the *fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*, and those proverbs, in almost every line

of which, they who neglect God and their own souls, are spoken of as fools, as if that were the most proper signification of the word, while the religious alone are honoured with the title of wise. But, in this respect, as attesting this truth in the name of God, and in his own, a greater than Solomon is here.

For if we require what it was that our Lord Jesus Christ judged to be the one thing needful, the words of the text contain as full an answer as can be imagined; and the sense of them is repeated in a very lively and emphatical manner, in that remarkable passage wherein our Lord not only declares his own judgment, but seems to appeal to the consciences of all, as obliged by their own secret convictions to subscribe to the truth of it. *What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul; or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?* If it were once lost, what would he not be willing to give to redeem it. But it depends not on the words of Christ alone. Let his actions, his sufferings, his blood, his death, speak what a value he set on the souls of men. Is it to be imagined, that he would have relinquished heaven, that he would have dwelt upon earth, that he would have laboured by night and by day, and at last have expired on the cross, for a matter of light importance? Or can we think that he, in whom dwells all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, was mistaken in a judgment so deliberately formed, and so solemnly declared?

If, after this, there were room to mention human judgment and testimonies, how easy would it be to produce a cloud of witnesses in such a cause, and to shew that the wisest and best of men in all ages of the world have agreed in this point, that, amidst all the diversities of opinion and profession, which succeeding generations have produced, this has been the unanimous judgment, this the common and most solicitous care of those whose characters are most truly valuable, to secure the salvation of their own souls, and to promote the salvation of others.

And let me beseech you seriously to reflect what are the characters of those who have taken the liberty most boldly and freely to declare their judgment on the contrary side! The number of such is comparatively few; and when you compare what you have observed of their temper and conduct, I will not say with what you read of holy men of old, but with what you have already seen in the faithful, active, and zealous servants of Christ, in these latter ages, with whom you have conversed, do you on the whole find that the

rejecters and deriders of the gospel are, in other respects, so much more prudent and judicious, so much wiser for themselves and for others that are influenced by them, as that you can be in reason obliged to pay any great deference to the authority of a few such names as these, in opposition to those to which they are here opposed?

But you will say, and you will say it too truly, though but a few may venture in words to declare for the neglect of the soul and its eternal interest, the greater part of mankind do it in their actions. But are the greater part of mankind so wise, and so good, as implicitly to be followed in matters of the highest importance? And do not multitudes of these declare themselves on the other side, in their most serious moments? When the intoxications of worldly business and pleasures are over, and some languishing sickness forces men to solitude and retirement, what have you generally observed to be the effect of such a circumstance? Have they not then declared themselves convinced of the truth we are now labouring to establish? Nay, do we not sometimes see that a distemper which seizes the mind with violence, yet does not utterly destroy its reasoning faculties, fixes this conviction on the soul in a few hours, nay, sometimes in a few moments? Have you never seen a gay, thoughtless creature surprised in the giddy round of pleasures and amusements, and presently brought not only to seriousness, but terror and trembling, by the neat views of death? Have you never seen the man of business and care interrupted, like the rich fool in the parable, in the midst of his schemes for the present world? And have you not heard of one and the other of them owning the vanity of those pleasures and cares, which but a few days ago were every thing to them? Confessing that religion was the one thing needful, and recommending it to others with an earnestness, as if they hoped thereby to atone for their own former neglect? We that are ministers, are frequently witnesses to such things as these, and I believe few of our hearers are entire strangers to them.

And once more, what if, to the testimony of the dying, we could add that of the dead? What if God were to turn aside the veil which separates between us and the invisible world, and to permit the most careless sinner in the assembly to converse for a few moments with the inhabitants of it? If you were to apply yourself to a happy spirit, that trod the most thorny road to paradise, or passed through the most fiery trial, and to ask him, Was it worth your while to labour so much, and to endure so much for what you now possess? Surely if the blessed in heaven were capable of indignation,

it would move them to hear that it should be made a question: And, on the other hand, if you could inquire of one tormented in that flame below, though he might once be clothed in purple and fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day, if you could ask him, Whether his former enjoyments were an equivalent for his present sufferings and despair, what answer do you suppose he would return? Perhaps an answer of so much horror and rage, as you would not be able so much as to endure. Or if the malignity of his nature should prevent him from returning any answer at all, surely there would be a language even in that silence, a language in the darkness and flames and groans of that infernal prison, which would speak to your very soul, what the word of God is with equal certainty, though with less forcible conviction, speaking to your soul's ear, that one thing is needful.—You see it is so in the judgment of God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, of the wisest and best of men, of many who seemed to judge most differently of it, when they came to more deliberate and serious thought, and not only of the dying, but of the dead too, of those who have experimentally known both worlds, and most surely know what is to be preferred. But I will not rest the whole argument here; I add, therefore,

2. I appeal to the evident reasons of the case itself, as it must appear to every unprejudiced mind, that the care of the soul is indeed the one thing needful.

I still consider myself as speaking not to Atheists, or to Deists, but to those who not only believe the existence and providence of God, and a future state of happiness and misery, but likewise who credit the truth of the Christian revelation, as many undoubtedly do who live in a fatal neglect of God and their own souls. Now, on these principles, a little reflection may be sufficient to convince you, that it is needful to the present repose of your own mind, needful if ever you would secure eternal happiness, if ever you would avoid eternal misery, which will be aggravated rather than alleviated, by all your present enjoyments.

1st. The care of the soul is the one thing needful, because without it you cannot secure the peace of your own mind, nor avoid the upbraidings of your conscience.

That noble faculty is, indeed, as you are often told, the vicegerent of God in the soul. It is sensible of the dignity and worth of an immortal spirit, and will sometimes cry out of the violence that is offered to it, and cry so loud, as to compel the sinner to hear, whether he will or not. Do you not sometimes find it so yourselves? When you labour most to forget the concerns of your soul, do they not sometimes force

themselves on your remembrance? You are afraid of the reflections of your own mind, but with all your artifice and all your resolution, can you entirely avoid them? Does not your conscience follow you to your beds, even if denied the opportunity of meeting you in your closets, and though with an unwelcome voice, there warn you, that your soul is neglected, and will quickly be lost. Does it not follow you to your shops and your fields, when you are busied there? Nay, I will add, does it not sometimes follow you to the feast, to the club, to the dance, and perhaps, amidst all resistance, to the theatre too? Does it not sometimes mingle your sweetest draught with wormwood, and your gayest scenes with horror? So that you are like a tradesman, who, suspecting his affairs to be in a bad posture, lays up his books and his papers, yet sometimes they will come accidentally in his way. He hardly dares to look abroad, for fear of meeting a creditor, or an arrest; and if he labour to forget his cares and his dangers in a course of luxury at home, the remembrance is sometimes awakened, and the alarm increased, by those very extravagancies in which he is attempting to lose it. Such, no doubt, is the case of some of your minds, and it is a very painful state; and while things are thus within, external circumstances can no more make you happy, than a fine dress could relieve you under a violent fit of the stone. Whereas, if this great affair were secured, you might delight in reflection, as much as you now dread it; and conscience, your bitter enemy, would become a delightful friend, and the testimony of it your greatest rejoicing.

2d. The care of the soul is the one thing needful, because without it you cannot possibly secure your eternal happiness.

A crown of everlasting glory is not surely such a trifle as to be thrown away on a careless creature, that will not in good earnest pursue it. God doth not ordinarily deal thus even with the bounties of his common providence, which are comparatively of little value. As to these, the hand of the diligent generally makes rich, and he would be thought distracted, rather than prudent, who should expect to get an estate merely by wishing for it, or without some resolute and continued application to a proper course of action for that purpose. Now, that we may not foolishly dream of obtaining heaven, in the midst of a course of indolence and sloth, we are expressly told in the word of God, that *the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.* And we are therefore exhorted to strive with the greatest intenseness, and eagerness of mind, as the word properly signifies, to enter in at the strait gate, for this great and important reason, *because*

many shall, another day, *seek to enter in, and shall not be able.* Nay, when our Lord makes the most gracious promises to the humble petitioner, he does it in such a manner as to exclude the hopes of those who are careless and indifferent. *Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.* If, therefore, you do not ask, seek, and knock, the door of mercy will not be opened, and eternal happiness will be lost.

And surely, if I could say no more as to the fatal consequences of your neglect than this, that eternal happiness will be lost, I should say enough to impress every mind that considers what eternity means. To fall into a state of everlasting forgetfulness, might indeed appear a refuge to a mind filled with the apprehension of future misery. But O how dreadful a refuge is it! Surely it is such a refuge as a vast precipice, from which a man falling would be dashed to pieces in a moment, might appear to a person pursued by the officers of justice, that he might be brought out to a painful and lingering execution. If an extravagant youth would have reason to look around with anguish on some fair and ample paternal inheritance, which he had sold or forfeited merely for the riot of a few days; how much more melancholy would it be for a rational mind to think that its eternal happiness is lost for any earthly consideration whatever. Tormenting thought! Had I attended to the one thing which I have neglected, I might have been great and happy beyond expression, beyond conception. Not merely for the little span of ten thousand, thousand ages, but FOREVER. So that the moment would have come, when, if it had been asked concerning me, "How long has that glorious spirit been an inhabitant of heaven? How long has it been enjoying God, and its self in that state of perfection?" The answer would have been such, that no line of any determinate, finite length, would have been sufficient to have contained the number of ages, no time can be assigned sufficient to figure them down. This is eternity, but I have lost it, and am now on the verge of being. This lamp, which might have outlasted those of the firmament, will presently be extinguished, and I blotted out from amongst the works of God, and cut off from all the bounties of his hand. Would not this be a very miserable case, if this were all? And would it not be sufficient to prove this to be the better part, which, as our Lord observes, can never be taken away? But, God forbid, that we should be so unfaithful to him, and to the souls of men, as to rest in such a representation alone. —I therefore add once more.

3d. The care of the soul is the one thing needful, because without it you cannot avoid a state of eternal misery, which will be aggravated rather than alleviated by all your present enjoyments.

Nothing can be more evident from the word of the God of truth. It there plainly appears to be a determined case which leaves no room for a more favourable conjecture or hope.—The wicked shall be turned into hell, even all the nations that forget God. They shall go away into everlasting punishment, into a state where they shall in vain wish for death, and shall not be able to find it. Oh! sirs, it is a certain, but an awful truth, that your souls will be thinking and immortal beings, even in spite of themselves. They may indeed torment, but, they cannot destroy themselves. They can no more suspend their power, thought and preception, than a mirror its property of reflecting rays that fall on its surface. Do you suspect the contrary? Make the trial immediately. Command your minds to cease from thinking but for one quarter of an hour, or for half that time, and exclude every idea and every reflection. Can you succeed in that attempt? Or rather, does not thought press in with a more sensible violence on that resistance, as an anxious desire to sleep makes us so much the more wakeful. Thus will thought follow you beyond the grave; thus will it, as an unwelcome guest, force itself upon you, when it can serve only to perplex and distress the mind. It will forever upbraid you, that, notwithstanding all the kind remonstrances of conscience, and the pleadings of the blood of Christ, you have gone on in your folly till heaven is lost, and damnation incurred; and all for what? For a shadow and a dream.

O think not, sinners, that the remembrance of your past pleasures, of your success in your other cares, whilst that of the one thing needful was forgotten—think not that this will ease your minds. It will rather torment them the more. Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things.—Bitter remembrance! Well might the heathen poets represent the unhappy spirits in shades below, as eagerly catching at the water of forgetfulness, yet unable to reach it. Your present comforts will only serve to give you a livelier sense of your misery, as having tasted such degrees of enjoyment, and to inflame the reckoning, as you have misimproved those talents lodged in your hands for better purposes.—Surely if these things were believed, and seriously considered, the sinner would have no more heart to rejoice in his present prosperity, than a man would have to amuse himself

with the curiosities of a fine garden, through which he was led to be broken upon the rack.

But I will enlarge no farther upon these things. Would to God that the unaccountable stupidity of men's minds, and their fatal attachment to the pleasures and cares of the present life, did not make it necessary to insist on them so frequently and so copiously.

IV. I proceed to the reflections which naturally arise from hence, and shall only mention two.

1. How much reason have we to lament the folly of mankind, in neglecting the one thing needful.

If religion be indeed the truest wisdom, then surely we have the justest reason to say with Solomon, that folly and madness are in men's hearts. Is it the one thing needful? Look on the conduct of the generality of mankind, and you would imagine they thought it the one thing needless; the vainest dream, and the idlest amusement of the mind. God is admonishing them by ordinances, and providences, sometimes by such as are most awful, to lay it to heart; he speaks once, yea twice, yea, a multitude of times, but men regard it not. They profess, perhaps, to believe all that I have been saying, but act as if the contrary were self-evident; they will risk these souls and this eternity, for a thing of nought, for that for the sake of which they would not risk so much as a hand or a finger, or a joint, no, nor perhaps a toy that adorns it. Surely this is the wonder of angels, and perhaps of devils too, unless the observation of so many ages may have rendered it familiar to both. And can we, my Christian brethren, behold such a scene with indifference? If some epidemical madness had seized our country, or the places where we live, so that as we went from one place to another, we should every where meet with lunaticks, and see amongst the rest some, perhaps of the finest genius and improvements, and in the most eminent stations of life, amusing themselves with straws and bubbles, or wounding themselves and others, surely were we ever so secure from the danger of infection or assault, the sight would cut us to the heart. Surely a good-natured man would hardly be able to go abroad, or even be desirous to live amongst so many sad spectacles. Yet these poor creatures might, notwithstanding this, be the children of God; and the higher their frenzy rose, the nearer might their complete happiness be. But, alas, the greater part of mankind are seized with a worse kind of madness, in which they are ruining their souls; and can we behold it with indifference? The Lord awaken our compassion, our prayers, and our endeav-

ours, in dependence on divine grace, that we may be instrumental in bringing them to their right mind, and making them wise indeed, that is, wise to salvation.

2. How necessary is it that we should seriously inquire how this one thing needful is regarded by us.

Let me entreat you to remember your own concern in it, and inquire, Have I thought seriously of it? Have I seen the importance of it? Has it lain with a due and an abiding weight on my mind? Has it brought me to Christ, that I might lay the stress of these great eternal interests on him? And am I acting in the main of my life as one that has these convictions? Am I willing in fact to give up other things, my interests, my pleasures, my passions to this? Am I conversing with God and with man as one that believeth these things, as one that has deliberately chosen the better part, and is determined to abide by that choice?

Observe the answer which conscience returns to these inquiries, and you will know your own part in that more particular application with which I am to conclude my discourse.

1. Let me address myself to those that are entirely unconcerned about the one thing needful.

Sirs, I have been stating the case at large, and now I appeal to your consciences, Are these things so, or are they not? God and your own hearts best know for what the care of your souls is neglected; but be it what it will, the difference between one grain of sand and another is not great, when it comes to be weighed against a talent of gold. Whatever it is, you have need to examine it carefully. You have need to view that commodity on all sides, of which you do in effect say, For this will I sell my soul, for this will I give up heaven and venture hell, be heaven and hell whatever they may. In the name of God, sirs, is this the part of a man, of a rational creature? To go on with your eyes open towards a pit of eternal ruin, because there are a few gay flowers in the way. Or what if you shut your eyes? Will that prevent your fall? It signifies little to say, I will not think of these things; I will not consider them. God has said, In the last days they shall consider it perfectly. The revels of a drunken malefactor will not prevent nor respite his execution. Pardon my plainness; if it were a fable or a tale, I might endeavour to amuse you with words, but I cannot do it where your souls are at stake.

2. I would apply to those who are convinced of the importance of their souls, yet are inclined to defer that care of them a little longer, which in the general, they see to be necessary.

I know you that are young, are under peculiar temptations to do this; though it is strange that the death of so many of your companions should not be an answer to some of the most specious and dangerous of those temptations. If there were the least degree of uncertainty, the importance is too weighty to put matters to the venture. But here the uncertainty is great and apparent. You must surely know that there are critical seasons of life for managing the concerns of it, which are of such a nature, that, if once lost, they may never return; here is a critical season. Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation. To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. This language may not be spoken to-morrow. Talk not of a more convenient season; none can be more convenient; and that to which you would probably refer it, is least of all so—A dying time. You would not choose then to have any important business in hand; and will you of choice refer the greatest business of all to that languishing, hurrying, amazing hour? If a friend were then to come to you with the balance of an intricate account or a view of a title to an estate, you would shake your fainting head, and lift up your pale, trembling hand, and say, perhaps with a feeble voice, Alas, is this a time for these things? And is it a time for so much greater things than these? I wish you knew, and would consider, in what a strait we that are ministers are sometimes brought, when we are called to the dying beds of those who have spent their lives in the neglect of the one thing needful. On the one hand, we fear lest, if we palliate matters, and speak smooth things, we shall betray and ruin their souls; and, on the other hand, that if we use a becoming plainness, and seriousness, in warning them of their danger, we shall quite overwhelm them, and hasten the dying moment, which is advancing by such steps. O let me entreat you for our sakes, and much more for your own, that you do not drive us to such sad extremities: but that if you are convinced, as I hope some of you may now be, that the care of the soul is that needful thing we have represented, let the conviction work, let it drive you immediately to the throne of grace, that from thence you may derive that wisdom and strength which may direct you in all the intricacies which entangle you, and animate you in the midst of difficulty and discouragement.

3. I would, in the last place, address myself to those happy souls, who have in good earnest attended to the one thing needful.

I hope, when you see how commonly it is neglected, neglected indeed by many, whose natural capacities, improve-

ments, and circumstances in life, appear to you superior to your own, you will humbly acknowledge, that it was distinguishing grace that brought you into this happy state, and formed you to this most necessary care. Bless the Lord, therefore, who hath given you that counsel, in virtue of which you can say, that he is your portion. Rejoice in the thought, that the great concern is secured; as it is natural for us to do, when some important affair is dispatched which has long lain before us, and which we have been inclined to put off from one day to another, but have at length strenuously and successfully attended. Remember still to continue acting on these great principles, which at first determined your choice; and seriously consider, that those who desire their life may at last be given them for a prey, must continue on their guard, in all stages of their journey through a wilderness, where daily dangers are still surrounding them. Having secured the great concern, make yourselves easy as to others of smaller importance. You have chosen the kingdom of God and his righteousness; other things therefore shall be added unto you; and if any which you desire should not be added, comfort yourselves with this thought, that you have the good part which can never be taken away. And, not to enlarge on these obvious hints which must so often occur, be very solicitous that others may be brought to a care about the one thing needful. If it be needful for you, it is for your children, your friends, your servants. Let them therefore see your concern in this respect for them, as well as for yourselves. Let parents, especially, attend to this exhortation, whose care for their offspring often exceeds in other respects and fails in this. Remember that your children may never live to enjoy the effects of your labour and concern, to get them estates and portions. The charges of their funerals may perhaps be all their share of what you are so anxiously careful to lay up for them. And O! think what a sword would pierce through your very heart, if you should stand by the corpse of a beloved child with this reflection, "This poor creature has done with life, before it learnt its greatest business in it, and is gone to eternity, which I have been seldom warning it to prepare for, and which perhaps it learnt of me to forget."

On the whole, may this grand care be awakened in those by whom it has hitherto been neglected; may it be revived in each of our minds. And that you may be encouraged to pursue it with greater cheerfulness, let me conclude with this comfortable thought, that in proportion to the necessity of the case, is the provision which divine grace has made for

our assistance. If you are disposed to sit down at Christ's feet, he will teach you by his word and Spirit. If you commit this precious jewel, which is your eternal all, into his hand, he will preserve it unto that day, and will then produce it, richly adorned, and gloriously improved, to his own honour and to your everlasting joy.—*Amen.*

THE END.

AN

INDEX OF SUBJECTS,

WHICH ARE

DISCUSSED OR ALLUDED TO

IN

DR. DODDRIDGE'S

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JNO. W. DAVIS,

Clerk of the District of Massachusetts.

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☞ *Several of the subjects referred to in this Index, are but incidentally mentioned, as understood in the general argument of the work; others are treated with some preciseness.*

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